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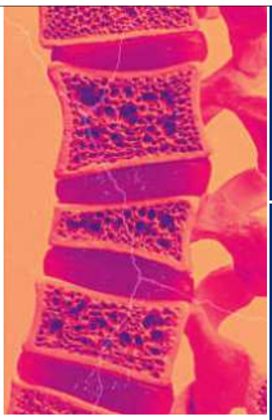
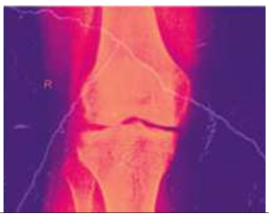


Life & Arts

How to avoid exercise injuries



‘Irresistible!’ Richard E Grant’s Very Modern Odyssey ★★★★

Life & Arts

The Guardian

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UK facing food shortages due to drought, say farmers

Helena Horton

Britain could face shortages of certain foods after parts of England faced a punishing drought, the president of the National Farmers’ Union has warned.

Farms across the country faced floods over the winter, making planting extremely difficult, and now they do not have access to water in many parts of England as irrigation is being restricted as a result of the drought.

This is the third drought in five years, said farming groups, warning that this was the “new normal” for agriculture in Britain. Farmers have been saying wheat is half its normal height, and England is having its earliest ever harvest as farmers battle to salvage what they can of their crops.

In some areas it has not rained for more than a month, while record-breaking heatwaves have hit the country since early summer, drying out the soil.

Tom Bradshaw, the president of the NFU, said the droughts could lead to food shortages and he had asked the prime minister to take action. He told BBC Radio 4 that farmers should be given tax breaks to build water storage systems on their land.

“Those other countries around the world that we currently rely on to produce our food and vegetables, their climates are changing as well,” he said. “It does feel like there are going be some shortages of [food] products.”

4 →

▲ *Chesterton Windmill in Warwickshire with farmland around it seared by the heat* PHOTOGRAPH: JACOB KING/PA WIRE

Dash to Ceuta

‘Moroccan police were shouting: Go! Run to Spain’

Okba Mohammad
Javier Jennings Mozo *Ceuta*

Four days ago Youssef El Abbas saw an opportunity to reclaim the life he had lost seven years earlier. News was circulating that about 400 people had swum from Morocco to the neighbouring Spanish territory of Ceuta on the north African coast, about 12 miles across the strait of Gibraltar from mainland Spain. Here was a chance for the 44-year-old Moroccan father of four to return to Spain, from where he had been deported when his residency expired after the loss of his job in Bilbao in 2019.

El Abbas took a taxi and headed to the city of Tétouan, south of Ceuta. While en route, he saw Facebook posts and news reports claiming that the Moroccan authorities were allowing people to pass through their side of the border.

That meant that, unlike those who had crossed the previous night, he could simply travel overland before swimming for five minutes across the border from Moroccan to Spanish territory to avoid the Spanish border controls.

He reached Tétouan to find the city completely

12 →

NHS trust plans to cut 330 mental health jobs

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

An NHS mental health trust plans to cut a wide range of its services and hundreds of jobs to close a £25m hole in its finances.

The move by the East London foundation trust (ELFT) and the scale of potential cuts have been called “unfathomable” given the rapidly rising demand for NHS mental health support. The plan has prompted fears that under-18s and adults needing psychological treatment will have to wait longer or be forced to go private, leading “to lives being destroyed”.

It will involve the “redesign” of at least 10 services such as child and adolescent mental health care, talking therapies, addiction support, help for adults undergoing a mental health crisis and community programmes, including for ethnic minorities and poor people.

Fothergill ward, a 20-bed intermediate care ward at the trust’s East Ham care centre, has stopped taking new referrals and is scheduled to close on 21 September.

ELFT’s list of where the cuts will hit and how many jobs will be lost shows it plans to shed 330 of its 6,000-strong workforce, about 5% of the total, through a combination of redundancies and the removal of posts. It said it was seeking £24.97m of cuts because NHS England obliged all of the country’s 205 trusts to balance their books.

Richard Munn, the national officer for health at the trade union Unite, said: “To see cuts to any mental health service is unfathomable and unacceptable. Cutting mental health services will lead to exponentially greater costs to the public purse and lives being destroyed.

“Such extensive cuts to

2 →

‘My biceps have a fan club

Meet Matt Damon’s Odyssey stunt double – a 4ft 6in woman

News *Page 3* →

'Stench of sleaze' after new claim of Farage deal over leadership

Alexandra Topping
Political correspondent

Reform UK is operating under a "stench of sleaze", Labour has said, after reports that Nigel Farage struck a secret deal to return as leader of Reform months before the general election.

Farage was in discussions about a return to the political frontline from as early as March 2024, despite later claiming he had no intention of returning to politics until June 2024, the Sunday Times reported.

In April this year, the Guardian revealed Farage did not disclose a £5m personal gift from the Thailand-based crypto billionaire Christopher Harborne that he received in April 2024.

He told senior figures in Reform UK he would need "a million a year" to cover lost earnings if he stood for parliament in the 2024 general election, sources told the Guardian.

Under parliamentary rules, newly elected MPs must register any relevant financial interests and gifts received in the 12 months before their election.

Farage has repeatedly said he was an "influencer" and media personality at the time of the gift and was therefore under no obligation to declare the sum. The parliamentary standards watchdog opened a formal investigation over the £5m gift in May.

Farage is also now subject to another inquiry over allegations of financial support from the crypto gambler and convicted fraudster George Cottrell, who is a close friend.

Farage – who is contesting a byelection in Clacton next week, after resigning over the issue – has accused those raising questions about his financial backing of "demonising" him as part of a "coordinated pile-on" to stop Reform UK.

The main parties have declined to field candidates against Farage. If he wins in Clacton but parliament imposes sanctions for failing to declare the gifts, he may be removed from the House of Commons and face a second byelection.

According to the Sunday Times, Farage renegotiated a deal – supervised by Cottrell – to return as the leader of Reform with the party's then leader, Richard Tice, in March and April 2024.

Under the terms of the deal, once Farage became leader Reform would repay or write off more than £1m in outstanding loans it had received from Tice's company, the Times reported.

The deal was reportedly to have been presented by Farage and Cottrell to the party's treasurer in mid-May, undermining the Reform leader's claim that he had no intention until June 2024 of returning to politics.

Reform sources told the Guardian that Farage had learned of the party's liabilities and what loans would have to be repaid if he returned as leader, and any plan had been drafted for if, not when, he became leader. They said he decided not to return, before reversing that decision.

Bridget Phillipson, the chair of the Labour party, said that if the revelations were accurate it "blows Nigel Farage's story apart".

"It would mean Farage was privately negotiating his return to frontline politics while publicly presenting as someone who hadn't decided whether to return," said Phillipson. "Grubby pacts, secret gifts, support from a convicted fraudster, attempted cover-ups and police investigations – it all adds up to a stench of sleaze the public can smell from miles away."

▶ *Nigel Farage reportedly negotiated a deal to return as leader of Reform UK in March-April 2024*
PHOTOGRAPH: CARLOS JASSO/AFP/GETTY

Restore Britain founder offers olive branch to Reform UK

Morgan Ofori

The leader of Restore Britain, Rupert Lowe, has extended an olive branch to Nigel Farage, saying the two should put "personalities and our past disagreements aside for the good of the country".

Lowe told the Reform UK leader that if he was "prepared to work together around serious policies, serious reform and serious government, then so are we".

In a video posted on X, Lowe said: "I truly believe there could be sufficient common ground for our two movements to cooperate collectively, destroy the looming leftwing alliance that will finish off what hope remains for this country.

"In my view, failing to even try because of our own personal difficulties is simply not an option. Now is the time to put our differences aside and cooperate for the good of the country that we all love."

Restore Britain placed fourth in the Greater Manchester mayoral byelection, its candidate, Marlon West, taking 8.7% of the vote. Reform's Sian Astley came second on 21% behind Labour's Bev Craig.

Lowe was among five Reform MPs who entered parliament in the 2024 general election, representing the constituency of Great Yarmouth.

He was suspended in March 2025, when accusations emerged of him bullying staff and threatening chair Zia Yusuf, claims he denied. He founded Restore Britain in February.

Lowe asked Farage to put "personalities and our past disagreements aside", and set five conditions for cooperation: mass deportation of illegal migrants, "including women and children"; tougher rules on legal migration and a ban on halal and kosher slaughter, the burqa, cousin marriage and sharia courts; a referendum on the death penalty; welfare cuts to fund "self-sufficiency"; and the exclusion of former Tory ministers from any future cabinet.

He cited Reform and Restore's cooperation on Norfolk county council as proof that cross-party working could succeed nationally.

Later on X, Farage framed the next election as "an existential fight to save the country" and said Reform would need support beyond its own ranks to win it.

"I understand Reform UK will need the support of people from other parties, as well as millions who have never voted before," he wrote. "That is the broad coalition I am building."

NHS trust plans 'unfathomable' cut of 330 mental health jobs

Continued *from page 1*

services and staff will inevitably lead to people with acute mental health problems, who need care urgently, facing longer waiting times. The consequence will in some cases be tragic, life-changing and irreversible."

Unite is preparing to ballot members at ELFT over potential strike action to protest against the cuts and the fact that its lead official at the trust, Mark Dunne, has lost his job as a result of what Munn called "a sham redundancy" that showed the "cold, uncaring nature of this employer".

ELFT provides mental health care in the east London boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham, and in Luton and Bedford.

The Labour MP for Poplar and Limehouse, Apsana Begum, has written to ELFT's chief executive, Lorraine Sunduza, voicing serious concern about the cuts. She asked if the trust had undertaken a risk assessment, given the likely impact on "public health, public safety and health equalities".

"I simply cannot envisage that cuts of that scale could be implemented without creating a substantial variation in how services are accessed by patients," she said. She noted that few of the plans had been announced for consultation, "despite the wide-ranging savings apparently intended" and job losses involved.

The report of the trust's finance committee to its most recent board meeting on 23 July did not mention the cuts or £25m savings target, even though they have been planned for weeks, prompting questions about ELFT's transparency given such large-scale cuts.

Dr Tony O'Sullivan, co-chair of the campaign group Keep Our NHS Public, said: "Given that many patients with mental health needs already face long delays before getting NHS care, cutting services as dramatically as ELFT proposes will mean that some of those in dire need of its help will inevitably go private to get the treatment they need.

"The contradiction is that while NHS funding for its own trusts is so limited that ELFT has to make £25m of cuts, the Department of Health and NHS England are happy to hand £2.5bn to private firms to expand capacity to treat NHS patients."

ELFT said it had not undertaken an impact assessment because "these are indicative proposals at an early stage," even though its list of cuts was accurate as at 7 May. No cuts would happen "without passing through quality impact assessment".

"We are working closely with our trade unions, colleagues and partners to identify the most effective and sustainable way to deliver the efficiencies, while protecting the quality and safety of care."

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▼ *Odysseus is confronted by the Laestrygonians, giant armoured cannibals, in The Odyssey*

PHOTOGRAPH: LANDMARK MEDIA/ALAMY

‘The greatest arms I’ve ever seen’: Matt Damon praises stunt double Devyn Dalton

Olivia Bowden
Toronto

One of the great unsung heroes of Christopher Nolan’s blockbuster The Odyssey, it turns out, is a 35-year-old woman, standing in for Matt Damon and displaying what the actor called “the greatest arms I’ve ever seen”.

Canadian Devyn Dalton was the Hollywood star’s stunt double in a pivotal scene where Odysseus, played by Damon, and his men are confronted by the Laestrygonians, giant armoured cannibals.

In order to make Damon and his crew appear dwarfed by the group of Goliaths, the actors doing the stunts needed to be small.

Damon is 5ft 10in (1.78 metres) tall, while Dalton is 4ft 6in (1.37 metres) and her rippling, muscular arms were perfect to represent Damon’s own biceps.

Dalton has “the greatest arms I’ve ever seen”, said Damon, while speaking to podcaster Josh Horowitz on his show Happy Sad Confused.

“Knowing my arms impressed Matt was honestly pretty special,” Dalton told the Guardian. “His shout out in the press completely caught me by surprise … I’ll always appreciate that he did.”

Dalton said she had known she wanted to tell stories since she was a child, inventing characters and costumes and putting on shows for her family. She started out acting professionally at nine years old, which gradually led her into stunt performing – a different way of telling those tales: through the body, through her own strength.

“We celebrate men who build careers around being powerful … so why shouldn’t women be celebrated for that too?” she said.

▲ *Dalton sported a fake beard to match Matt Damon’s as she stood in as Odysseus in the battle scene above*

After Damon made the comments in his press tour for The Odyssey, the big-screen adaptation of Homer’s epic Greek poem that has become a huge hit for Nolan and the cultural talking point of the summer, Dalton said her phone “absolutely exploded”.

She is currently filming a project in New Zealand and was by no means expecting to receive global attention. “Apparently my biceps have their own fan club right now, which definitely wasn’t on my 2026 prediction,” she said.

She said she was cast in the role in The Odyssey through the network of professional representatives and stunt coordinators, rather than any open casting call.

▲ *Devyn Dalton hones her biceps with Muay Thai, dance and yoga*

“When I found out I booked it, I was genuinely so excited and incredibly grateful. It’s one of those moments where years of hard work and persistence suddenly feels worthwhile,” she said.

Dalton flew to Scotland to film it, and she said it was a continuous reminder of just how many people it takes to put together a production like The Odyssey. “What audiences see for a few minutes often represents months of preparation,” she said.

Dalton said she trained hard for the role, refining her regular regime of exercises, a combination of muay thai, jiu-jitsu, dance, yoga and strength-based workouts.

“I took the responsibility very seriously,” she said. Damon’s mention of her on the podcast made her feel the hard training truly paid off.

Meeting him on set, Dalton said that “he’s every bit as genuine, kind and generous as you’d hope”.

Stunt performing is actually an exercise in being extremely well-rehearsed and prepared, rather than engaging in anything dangerous or scary, she said. “The best stunt performers are very aware of risk.”

Some audiences have been vocal online that stuntwomen in particular should be recognised for their physical prowess .

“I’m proud to represent strong women … I’m passionate about encouraging more people, especially young women, to realise there isn’t just one path into this industry,” she said. “I hope more young girls grow up believing they never have to choose between being strong and being themselves.”

As for what’s next, Dalton said she would love to take the lead in a film or series as a starring actor who, of course, could do her own stunts.

“Audiences are hungry for new faces … I’d love to show what I’m capable of,” she said.

Actor Vincent Pastore, known for Sopranos role, dies aged 80

Associated Press

Vincent Pastore, the US actor best known for playing Salvatore “Big Pussy” Bonpensiero in The Sopranos, has died aged 80.

Bob McGowan, who had managed Pastore since his time on The Sopranos, told Associated Press that he learned of his death on Saturday from another client and actor on the show, Vincent Curatola.

◀ *Pastore also appeared in movies such as Goodfellas and Awakenings*

He said Pastore had been found at his home in Long Island, New York, after not being heard from for a few days. “He was the most loyal client and he always gave to charity,” McGowan said. “He was the kind of guy who would help anybody, which is rare in my business.”

Robert Attermann, who previously represented Pastore for more than 30 years, said: “Vinny was one of the kindest, most generous people I have ever known. He treated everyone with warmth and respect, never turning down a fan who wanted a photograph or an autograph.”

Michael Imperioli, a longtime friend and collaborator, said on Instagram that it seemed as though he had known Pastore for ever. “We did lots of work together and traveled all over the USA as well as Italy and Australia. Lots of good times. Lots of laughs.

“Vinny was a kind-hearted brother who cared deeply about his family and friends. I will miss him always.”

Pastore had been acting in films since the 1980s including in Goodfellas and Awakenings, both in 1990. He was best known for his 30-episode run as Bonpensiero in The Sopranos, where he played the friend of Tony Soprano who becomes an informant.

He was born in the Bronx and grew up in suburban New Rochelle, New York. He enlisted in the navy during the Vietnam war and later attended Pace University, according to IMDb.

He is survived by his daughter, Renee Pastore.

Farmers say UK faces shortage of some foods due to drought

Continued *from page 1*

Meanwhile the heatwave will continue into this week, and the UK Health Security Agency issued heat-health alerts last night for eight regions of England.

These amber alerts will be in place for the East Midlands, the east of England, the south-east and London regions from 9am today until 9am on Wednesday. The north-west, Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands and the south-west regions will be under a yellow alert during the same period.

Climate breakdown is exacerbating extreme weather conditions such as droughts.

This summer the Met Office has reported that England had 8% of its meteorological average rainfall for July and it is likely to be confirmed as the driest July on record.

Approximately 23 million people across England and Wales are under a hosepipe ban. The dry weather has also fuelled devastating wildfires across the country, most recently in Suffolk.

Bradshaw told Andy Burnham: "Let's draw a line in the sand and make sure we prioritise domestic food production to deliver growth across the UK."

Cereals such as wheat and barley have been particularly affected, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) said.

Anthony Hopkins, the AHDB's director of cereals and oilseeds, said: "Across much of the UK, combine [harvesters] have been rolling earlier than usual this year, with many farmers working through the night to avoid the most extreme daytime temperatures. Cereal yields have generally been below the 10-year average so far, with some farms experiencing significant reductions."

Anthony Speight, senior analyst, cereals and oilseeds, added: "At this stage, the emerging picture points to disappointing cereal yields in many areas, but we'll gain a clearer understanding as harvest continues."

A recent report found a third of British farmers were making a loss or only breaking even.

Gavin Lane, the president of the Country, Land and Business Association, said: "Farmers are telling us this is the worst harvest in years. A sodden winter followed by drought has left wheat at half its usual height and some crops not worth harvesting.

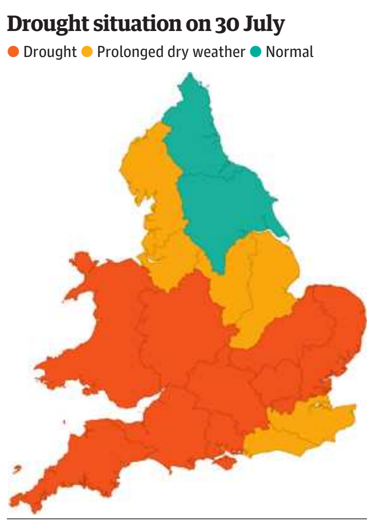
"This is the third drought in five years. What was once extraordinary is becoming part of farming in Britain, and government must start planning for it.

"We know that proper government investment in resilient farming systems, from reservoirs to wildfire prevention, could help farmers cope with these new extremes.

"Farmers have shown again and again that they can adapt and deliver solutions, but resilience has limits. If we want them to keep feeding the country, they need proper support. Otherwise, this harvest could be their last."

Polly Ashmore, acting consultant in public health at the UKHSA, said periods of hot weather could result in serious health outcomes, especially for older adults, and it was therefore important that everyone take sensible precautions.

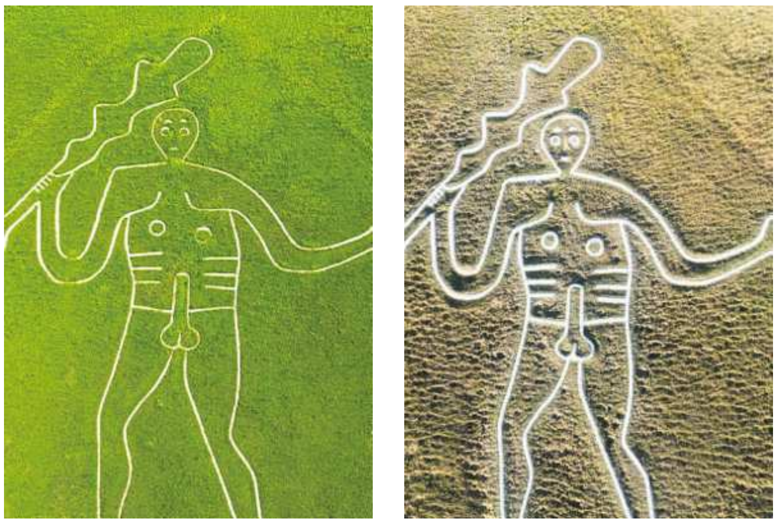
"We are urging health and social care services in affected regions to ensure they are prepared, and reminding people to look out for elderly relatives, neighbours and those with underlying health conditions, making sure they are aware of the forecast and following the necessary advice," she said.


Drought situation on 30 July

● Drought ● Prolonged dry weather ● Normal

Source: Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales

Journal Leader comment →



◀ *Walkers and runners on a parched Southampton Common; and the Cerne Giant in August 2023, left, and now, right* MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: SOLENT NEWS

Not green or pleasant July set to be driest month on record

Bethan McKernan

Half of England and the whole of Wales are officially in drought and July is set to be the driest month on record, as extreme heat intensified by the climate crisis continues to grip the UK and Europe this summer.

The announcements this week by England's Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales mark the third such event of the past five years, and come in the wake of four record-breaking heatwaves since May, which have fuelled huge wildfires and left farmers, wildlife and protected habitats running out of water.

England had just 7% of the long-term average rainfall for July and southern England just 1%, damaging greenery in parks, protected land and sports fields. The dry spell has also led to shrinking rivers and lakes: the Thames at Reading has recorded its lowest ever level.

Water companies are not currently expecting a threat to drinking water supplies, as record winter rainfall means reservoirs are still close to expected levels, but approximately 23 million people across England and Wales are under a hosepipe ban.

The visible impact is impossible to ignore: vast swathes of William Blake's "green and pleasant land" are now brown and dry. The Met Office predicts the climate crisis will make UK summers 1C-6C (1.8F-10.8F) hotter and up to 60% drier by 2070, compared with 1990.

Both adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of a warming planet are urgently needed, said Dr Chloe Brimicombe, a climate scientist at the University of Oxford.

"This summer has been a compounding of dry weather," said Brimicombe, "leading to droughts and hot weather and high temperatures leading to heatwaves, with these conditions also leading to wildfires. It is a strong indication that we need better long-term planning. Climate change is not a future problem; it's a challenge for right now."

As the climate crisis supercharges "whiplash" wet-then-dry weather, the UK and Europe have seen back-to-back heatwaves that encourage vegetation to grow but then dry it out, producing ideal fuel for fires.

Firefighters have responded to 393 wildfires across England and Wales in July, making it the busiest month on record and placing significant pressure on crews and resources. Hundreds of people have already been evacuated owing to the threat of fire, compared with approximately 50 in 2025 – the worst year for wildfires on record so far.

Cairngorms national park in the Scottish Highlands has suffered the worst fires in living memory, while smoke from fires in the Rhinogydd mountains in north Wales could be seen from space.

Statistics for July are not available yet, but North Wales fire and rescue service said it had recorded 48 wild, grassland, woodland and crop fires in June, up 47% on 2025.

Farmers across the country have been forced to harvest early or are worried about losing crops if they run out of water. Riverford Organic Farmers in Buckfastleigh, Devon, takes a long-term approach to water management and soil health, planning years in advance, but this growing season has been one of the hottest and driest of the last 40 years.

Luke King, the farm's supply chain and technical director, said: "Scarcity of water has become a big challenge for us, but what has compounded this has been the heat stress on plants. All but one of our [four] reservoirs have now run dry, which is something we'd never normally expect so early in the season. What we currently have is no longer sufficient."

The team has begun harvesting earlier in the day to protect crops and pickers, and dedicating lots of time and resources to irrigation.

"Even with irrigation, you can't water everything at once," said King, "so difficult decisions have to be made about prioritising crops, and even with water, if the temperature is too high, it can evaporate quickly."

Meanwhile, lost archaeological sites have been rediscovered in dried-out crop and grassland around the country, including neolithic, bronze and iron age structures and practice trenches from the first world war.

Roman-era buildings have been uncovered at Caerhun Roman fort in Conwy, while the outline of an ornate 17th-century garden at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire is visible once again after first being revealed by dry weather in 2018 and 2022.

In London's parks – crucial green spaces in a densely populated and emission-high city – people have still tried to enjoy the summer sunshine.

Adel Khaireh, a councillor for Greenwich, which includes a large park and commons at Blackheath and Woolwich, said: "We're particularly grateful to local people such as the network of Friends of Parks groups who help us water trees and plants across the borough, and support our iconic parks on a voluntary basis."

Athens murder

Arrest over death of woman found in suitcase *Page 9*

On the money?

Birds or icons: new designs for euro banknotes *Page 9*

100
EURO
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20
5

Ultra-processed food firms 'hindering effort to tackle obesity crisis by suing countries'

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

The world's biggest ultra-processed food corporations are hindering efforts to tackle the obesity crisis by suing governments that try to promote healthier diets, the head of the World Health Organization has said.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO director general, accused global food companies of obstructing the adoption of vital public health measures and costing countries billions of dollars in healthcare and legal costs in the process.

Almost 1 billion people globally are living with obesity, and unhealthy diets are one of the main drivers of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer. Ultra-processed food (UPF) consumption is soaring and now makes up half the average diet in many countries, including the UK, the US and Australia.

Governments have begun introducing measures designed to curb junk-food intake and promote healthier diets. These include front-of-pack warning labels, marketing and advertising restrictions on unhealthy products, and taxes on junk food.

Publicly the world's biggest UPF companies say they back the policies, want to help consumers make informed choices, and are committed to being part of the solution.

But an investigation by the Guardian, in collaboration with academics, the non-profit newsroom Lighthouse Reports and a coalition of media partners across four continents, found many of these same companies were taking governments to court to overturn, weaken or delay the policies.

▲ *Consumption of UPFs accounts for half the average diet in the UK*

In total, 235 lawsuits were lodged over health policies targeting UPFs in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, the US and the UK from 2010 to 2025, the investigation found.

"The findings of the global investigation by the Guardian and other outlets into ultra-processed food come as no surprise, but they are met with grim recognition," Tedros said. "When harm and profit are tied to the same product, a familiar pattern of industry interference emerges: sowing doubt and obstructing regulation."

Of the resolved lawsuits, three-quarters were lost by the food corporations. But even the unsuccessful cases delayed the adoption of vital public health measures for years while also tying up government and public health officials in complex and expensive litigation.

The litigation by UPF firms suggests objectives beyond winning: slowing down the rollout of laws and crushing the desire and ability of other countries and regulators to adopt similar policies. Crucially, Tedros said, the lawsuits have prolonged the deadly obesity crisis, costing countries billions of dollars in legal and healthcare costs.

"The report documents how litigation has been used to oppose or weaken public health measures on obesity and unhealthy diets, amounting to nearly 600 cumulative years of costly legal battles, an average of 2.5 years per case, most of them unsuccessful," he said.

In the first multi-country analysis of its kind, the Guardian and other media outlets worked with researchers from the Robert and Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center, the University of Sydney, the University of São Paulo and the University of Caldas to investigate the scale of the UPF industry's legal pushback.

Three-quarters of the lawsuits were filed by UPF companies or trade groups representing them.

Of the lawsuits filed by companies where the plaintiff could be identified, 38% were brought by eight parent corporations: Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Mondelēz, Kellogg's, Danone, Ferrero, Xignux and Heartland Food Products Group.

Purple reign: the calming colour is the gardener's new favourite

Helena Horton

▲ *A small tortoiseshell butterfly also enjoys the benefits of lavender*

PHOTOGRAPH: MATT BERRY/BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION

If you manage to spot a garden in bloom this summer, beyond the strips of bleached and torched grass, there may be one colour you see more than any other: purple, the horticultural hue of the season.

Plants such as lavender, salvia and catmint are in vogue, according to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), which conducted extensive research into the colours British people most love to see in their gardens.

In one experiment at RHS Garden Wisley's Hilltop, more than 11,000 visitors were asked to choose their preferred shades. Purple hues accounted for the most (26.67%).

The purple patch has surprised garden trend watchers and marks a departure from recent less dramatic fashions. Grey hues have been very popular in home and garden design over the last few years.

Tom Massey, an award-winning garden designer based in London, said clients wanted bright colours, particularly purples. He said: "We've moved away from the era of large expanses of decking, paving and lawn towards richer, more naturalistic planting inspired by meadows and natural plant communities."

Laura Carey, who co-owns Carey garden designs, has found that purple is the most popular colour with her clients, too. She said: "Purple is a favourite across the board with all of our clients. There are so many purple flowering plants to choose from, including favourites like lavender, alliums and geraniums."

Massey added: "Purple has always been a hugely important colour in gardens because it combines beautifully with greens, silvers and the buff tones of ornamental grasses. It also attracts pollinators and tends to have a calming quality. Plants like salvia, nepetas, alliums and lavender remain incredibly popular for exactly those reasons."

The popularity of the colour may be related to the emotions it evokes in humans. Other research found that different colours can provoke varying emotions in garden visitors, with purples and blues evoking a sense of calm and relaxation.

Massey said: "I think people are becoming much more confident with colour generally."

The findings were published in the study Flower Power: How favourite flower colours shape how we feel in the journal Acta Psychologica.

Dr Ashby Sachs, a wellbeing fellow at the RHS, said: "Colour is a key consideration when it comes to garden design, but little is known about how it interacts with our sense of wellbeing. That different shades of colour can elicit an anticipated emotional response in people is incredibly useful when it comes to designing spaces such as in schools and hospitals."

Playbooks, plagiarism and a pig's head

New claims surround a star Cambridge professor

Jason Arday was regarded as an academic superstar, but then questions about his work prompted scrutiny of his backstory and counterclaims of racism. **Lanre Bakare** reports

When the superstar academic Jason Arday took the stage at the British Sociological Association's 75th anniversary conference earlier this year, he delivered a talk called Wanted Dead or Alive: the Playbook.

The youngest black professor in the history of the University of Cambridge told an audience of his peers that the playbook in question had helped bring down some of the biggest names in US academia. Conservative "activists" were trawling through the work of black academics, looking for anything to use against them: inconsistencies, citation errors, passages in their work that were similar to existing papers. Once an error was identified, rightwing media outlets and conservative politicians joined the pile-on - heaping pressure on universities to cut ties.

Claudine Gay, the first black woman to become president of Harvard, was in the post for only six months before she was forced out over plagiarism allegations. Others said they felt like "sitting ducks" as their work was pulled apart. Some academics have killed themselves after being hounded out of their positions.

The playbook was not restricted to the US, Arday explained. The same tactics were being used to bring down some of the UK's most high-profile black academics.

"The instruments that are designed to protect academic integrity, designed to protect our wellbeing and our intellectual property, are weaponised," he told the audience in April. He called for his peers to defend him. "There isn't any room to sit there and watch your fellows suffer for no reason. It's abhorrent, it's a disgrace and, quite frankly, evil," he added. "That's the cancer that we need to eradicate from academia."

Some of the audience thought it was strange. Keynote speeches are usually places where academics talk about their work and discuss breakthroughs, yet here was Arday talking about racism and harassment. Some felt he must have been saying this for a reason.

Then last week a row erupted concerning Arday's academic work. The Telegraph reported that analysis had found more than 100 passages in his PhD were similar to another thesis by Paula Zwozdiak-Myers, a student at Brunel University in London, published six years earlier.

The report followed a Substack post by Nathan Cofnas, an academic who was previously embroiled in a free speech row at Cambridge after he suggested in a blogpost that, in a meritocracy, there would be "close to zero" black professors at Harvard. The British politician and activist Simon Woolley called the post "abhorrent racism, masquerading as pseudo-intellect".

Cofnas, a self-defined "race realist", was sacked by Cambridge's Emmanuel College in 2024 and underwent a disciplinary investigation into the blogpost about black academics. The investigation concluded that Cofnas was not guilty of "discrimination or harassment" and that his views, "while seen by many as offensive, did not breach the law and did not contravene university regulations designed to uphold free speech". He now works at Ghent University in Belgium.

Cofnas claimed he had put Arday's PhD through plagiarism detection software, which found that "many passages are lifted with minimal editing, sometimes retaining copy-editing mistakes from the original source".

Another critic of Arday was Dr David Harris, a professor emeritus at Plymouth Marjon University, who had previously written to Cambridge with claims about Arday's work. Harris had been stripped of his professor emeritus title after he wrote a post about critical race theory that was deemed "controversial" by colleagues, but it was reinstated this year. After Harris's earlier queries about Arday's work, two corrections were made to papers released in 2018 and 2020.

The fact that the two most vocal critics of Arday harboured controversial views on race

▼ *Jason Arday has faced plagiarism accusations and scrutiny of claims he has made about his achievements*

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTIAN SINIBALDI/GUARDIAN

appeared to inform Cambridge's response, which was a robust defence of Arday. The university called the claims a "vile smear campaign to undermine his credibility".

An open letter in support of Arday, signed by the Green party leader, Zack Polanski, and the prominent black studies academic Kehinde Andrews, argued there was "an orchestrated and grim effort to delegitimise a brilliant, young, working-class academic for the sin of being successful while Black".

Cambridge said it had passed complaints to the university where Arday completed the PhD, Liverpool John Moores, which had reviewed the work and found he had not plagiarised it.

"We take allegations of academic misconduct incredibly seriously," a Cambridge spokesperson said. "It is university procedure that investigations are carried out by the institution at which the research was undertaken. This is standard practice in the sector because that institution has access to the information to ensure a full and fair investigation."

Arday told the Guardian he fully supported "fair investigation processes for genuine concerns" of academic misconduct. He added: "To clarify, there have been multiple thorough investigations across several institutions as a result of the allegations, and immense scrutiny, including with an academic misconduct panel who concluded that there was no plagiarism or academic misconduct."

But prominent academics of colour whom the Guardian spoke to said the claims of plagiarism were legitimate, and that Arday's alleged actions risked undermining others who study race.

Some of Arday's peers said the fallout from the row could send shockwaves through academia and set the study of race in Britain back 20 years.

One academic, who has worked in the area of race and education for decades and spoke to the Guardian on condition of anonymity, said the accusations against Arday were worrying. "I think it's plagiarism and it's obvious," they said.

John Preston, an emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Essex, said: "Having seen the evidence, it triangulates and there is, in my judgment, a case to answer here."

Some have argued that Arday has come under unfair levels of scrutiny. But the academics the Guardian spoke to said it was "fair for someone at Cambridge" in one of the most prestigious positions in academia.

The tone of the coverage from rightwing publications has been a mix of outrage and "I-told-you-so" self-righteousness, with the Telegraph describing Arday as a "diversity poster boy", and his online accusers all sharing a critical view of diversity, equity and inclusion policies.

The stakes are high for all concerned. For Arday, the accusations are potentially ruinous - plagiarism is as serious as it gets for academic malpractice and the professor has consistently claimed he has done nothing wrong.

In an interview with the Times on Friday he suggested the issue had been blown out of proportion. "I am accountable for the mistakes I've made," he said. "I hold myself accountable and other people should hold me accountable. We're talking about academia here. I didn't murder somebody. I think the cruelty that I've experienced, and the positioning of me as this kind of liar and fantasist, is totally unacceptable."

For Cambridge, there are questions about judgment over Arday's appointment, which occurred when its own track record on race was being scrutinised in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement. Cambridge had been criticised for the lack of diversity in its student body and faculty; when Arday was hired, there were only five black professors at the university.

But the accusations of plagiarism are only one element of the Arday story.

In March 2023, the sociologist's arrival at Cambridge made headlines around the world. Not only was he the youngest black professor in the university's history, but his backstory made that feat all the more impressive. His story is to be detailed in a memoir for Simon & Schuster this autumn.

At the age of three, the south Londoner was diagnosed with autism and global developmental delay. He was unable to speak until he was 11 and could not read or write until 18. Despite that, he forged an impressive academic career, focusing mostly on race and education, with stints at Roehampton, Glasgow and Durham universities.

From 17, Arday began completing charity challenges to raise money for various causes. They were often endurance challenges, which began when he was taking a BTec course in sport and development at Merton College in Morden, south London.

He has claimed in media interviews to have raised £5m for charities over a 20-year period (sometimes this figure has risen to £5.5m). He has done this, he says, by running 30 marathons in 35 days - a feat he has spoken about in media interviews and in his book. He also claimed at public events to have run 600 miles in six days.

As his critics online have pointed out, £5m raised for charity would be a staggering amount for someone who was not already famous. In 2012, Arday said he hoped to raise £250,000 by the time he was 50.

When asked if the £5m figure was accurate, Arday clarified to the Guardian that the money was raised with the help of "many fundraising collectives over a two-decade period". When asked to identify other people who took part in these efforts, Arday said he had signed NDAs preventing him from disclosing that information.

The Guardian also asked Arday about his claim to have run 600 miles in six days, an achievement that would make him one of the world's most gifted endurance runners. (The first woman to achieve the feat, Megan Eckert, managed it only last year; the men's record is 650 miles.) He said that because of the "cumulative wear and tear of training" from his previous running challenges he "had to put rest days in between

➔ **Continued** *on page 8*

Continued *from page 7*

the running days just to finish” the 600-mile challenge, which was actually completed over a 12-day period.

This year, two universities that had given Arday honorary degrees and doctorates amended their websites, with Southampton Solent University removing the 600 miles citation, and Anglia Ruskin University changing the six days claim to 12 days.

In 2012, Arday was a torchbearer for the Olympic Games and met the tennis player Andy Murray via the TV programme Surprise, Surprise.

After the meeting, Murray said Arday had told him a story that inspired him to victory in his gold medal win against Novak Djokovic. “He is an epileptic who ran 30 marathons in 35 days,” said Murray. “He told me that on the 20th day he fell - he had a fit, a seizure - and had a hairline fracture in his leg, but he continued. He had asked to meet me, and that was pretty cool, speaking to someone like that.”

When asked by reporters at the time why he carried on, Arday said: “When I fell over, I didn’t want to have to pay back thousands of pounds.”

Doctors have told the Guardian that running nine marathons with a hairline fracture in a fibula would be incredibly painful, though technically not impossible. In his forthcoming memoir, Arday says he completed the distance by taking painkillers and despite his right leg swelling to twice its normal size. He previously said in a 2012 interview that he used ice baths to ease the pain between his runs.

As well as scrutiny of his academic record and fundraising history, Arday claims to have been the victim of a campaign of physical abuse and intimidation.

He began being sent racist emails as soon as he took up his position at Cambridge, becoming so intense that his emails had to be screened. But the messages paled in comparison with the other incidents that the academic said he had faced.

In an open letter to the Labour government minister Jacqui Smith in July 2025, which outlined Arday’s experiences, he claimed to have been “threatened with a knife, physically assaulted and spat on; [had] rape and death threats being made to him and his family; bananas and bullets being posted to him via the university campus; and corrosive substances and mutilated animals sent to his family home”.

In a subsequent interview with the Guardian, Arday claimed to have been confronted at his faculty building on two separate occasions by a masked man threatening to harm him if he did not resign, and evading detection both times.

On the second occasion Arday said that the intruder had produced a knife and then threatened him with it.

The Guardian understands that after Arday reported the first intrusion to the university, enhanced CCTV was placed in the faculty and a panic alarm was installed in his office. The professor said he hit the panic alarm during the second confrontation, but that no one responded. It should have triggered an alarm alerting the faculty’s security team, all of whom were present at the time of the alleged incident.

▲ *Jason Arday, now a professor at the University of Cambridge, at his PhD award ceremony in 2016 at Liverpool John Moores University*

The intruder was not picked up by CCTV on either occasion and no one in the faculty reported seeing anyone suspicious. Arday did not report either intrusion at the time, telling the Guardian that after the second incident he continued his working day and even conducted a PhD viva for a student less than two hours later.

He did not inform colleagues that a masked man with a knife was in the faculty building.

Arday confirmed in an interview with the Guardian that the “mutilated animals sent to his family home” mentioned in the open letter was a severed pig’s head, delivered in a large cardboard box to his parents’ home address in south London. He claimed to have intercepted the package and immediately thrown it away, only telling the police several months later.

In a subsequent interview he claimed the police investigated, checking with butchers in south London if they had sold a pig, eventually finding one that had sold a “whole hog” on the morning the head was left outside the family home.

When the Guardian checked those details with the local butchers Arday named, they said no police officer had come in to ask them about a pig. When asked if they were sure, the butcher said “that’s the kind of thing we’d remember”.

When the details Arday gave about the pig’s head investigation were checked by London’s Metropolitan police, the Guardian was told they were “categorically” incorrect and no investigation had taken place.

Arday had contacted the Met to lodge a complaint of harassment against Harris after his plagiarism allegations and, because he was based in Plymouth, the case was handed over to Devon and Cornwall police. Correspondence seen by the Guardian confirmed that the force declined to pursue a case against Harris.

Arday took no photographs of the bullet, the banana, the corrosive substance or the pig’s head. The only other people who saw any of the items were close family members, who told the Guardian Arday had shown them the bullet and the “poison”. Arday could produce no messages from the time in which he discussed any of the items with friends, family, colleagues or the police.

> *‘It’s important for the whole discipline [of the sociology of education] that he addresses these claims’*
>
> **Prof John Preston**
> *University of Essex*

A University of Cambridge spokesperson said: “As soon as Prof Arday shared concerns with the faculty a number of enhanced security measures were urgently taken in response, with the advice and continuing engagement of university security and the police. These include the installation of panic alarms, screening of emails, post and packages, upgraded CCTV and revised security protocols.”

There are many examples of prominent black figures being intimidated in recent British history.

Black footballers, including Brendon Batson, reported being sent a bullet in the post during the 1970s after being selected for England. Bananas were often used by racists to insult black people. Severed pig heads have been attached to the walls of mosques by far-right groups. People have been attacked and intimidated at their place of work. Malicious communication is commonplace. Black academics are frequently hounded by organised groups.

But the abuse and harassment Arday has outlined would be some of the most extreme any academic has been subjected to in the UK.

When Arday was asked about his claims by the Guardian, he stood by them. “To be honest with you, I thought you’d just believe me,” he said. “Why would I lie?” He would be jeopardising his career.

In Arday’s memoir, Great and Unfortunate Things, he references the scrutiny placed on him and his work.

He writes that people have been “outraged and offended” by the idea of a black professor at such an elite institution, and that he has faced harassment and persecution as “the subject of targeted campaigns driven by racial animus”.

“There have been days when I can only describe the experience as traumatising. It’s hard for people to even comprehend or imagine the toll this can take on a person,” he writes.

But the row over his academic work and some of the claims he has made is far bigger than one person.

“The whole area of the sociology of education, and particularly race studies within that, is very fragile,” said Prof Preston. “It is primarily Black, Asian and minoritised people who work and study in those subjects.

“Prof Arday probably holds the top position in the world in sociology of education. It’s important for the whole discipline that he addresses these claims.”

In a recent interview to promote the memoir, Arday spoke about feeling like Icarus when he came under scrutiny after joining Cambridge. “I always wanted to be a person who flew close to the sun,” he said. “But sometimes I wonder: did I fly too close?”

Greek police arrest man over body of Scottish woman found inside suitcase

Helena Smith
Athens

Greek authorities said yesterday they had arrested an Afghan national in connection with the death of a Scottish woman whose body was found in a suitcase in an abandoned building in central Athens.

Elisabeth-Jane Ross, 38, a charity worker who was described by friends as an "angel full of innocence and goodness", had arrived in Greece on 26 June and is believed to have died between five and seven days before her body was found on 18 July, according to police.

Police sources said the suspect was a 26-year-old Afghan citizen who had allegedly confessed to the crime. He had been brought in for questioning by Greece's homicide division on Thursday, two days after Ross's body was publicly identified.

A statement released by the police said: "A criminal file has been opened against a 26-year-old foreign national for intentional homicide, robbery and violation of the law [regarding] weapons."

He is expected to be charged today.

Throughout the investigation, Greek authorities had worked closely with the UK's National Crime Agency and the Police Service of Scotland, according to the statement.

Ross, who had strong links with the charity sector in Greece, is the daughter of a prominent lawyer in Edinburgh, where she also lived.

▲ *Elisabeth-Jane Ross was described as an 'angel full of innocence'*

She was reported to have friends in the area of Kypseli, where her body was discovered by a homeless man in what had been a car park. Wrapped in cloth, it had been placed in a suitcase left in a building at the site.

Sources told the Guardian the suspect's alleged use of credit cards that belonged to Ross had contributed to police identifying him. "He was caught on camera withdrawing money with the cards from various ATMs," one said. "The credit cards belonged to Ms Ross. That played a big role in leading us to him."

For days investigators were unable to make headway, citing the lack of fingerprints or DNA on the suitcase. Adding to the mystery was the discovery that her phone had been used up until the body was publicly identified last week. Police had described text messages sent to her father and other members of her family as deliberately misleading. The messages had spoken of her "need to be alone".

The Briton's "dispersed movements" in the days leading up to her death had made the quest to track her killer even harder.

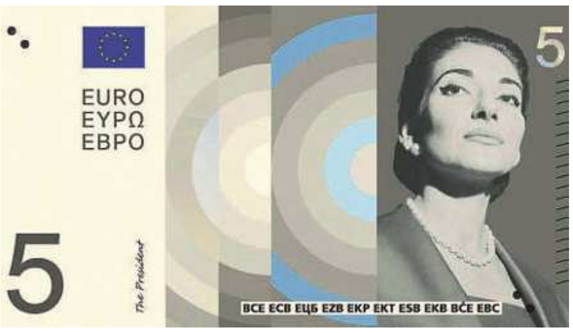
After leaving the home of close friends in Keratsini, close to the port of Piraeus, where she had stayed after flying into Greece, she had gone her own way, renting an apartment in the district of Exarchia in Athens.

"As confirmed, the victim arrived in the country on June 26 and stayed at the home of friends until July 10, from where she departed to an unknown [address]," the police statement said.

Police said they had made the statement after amassing evidence that proved the Afghan had "placed the body in the case and carried it to the abandoned car park" in Kypseli.

Analysis of CCTV footage had played a role. "The subsequent preliminary investigation … using investigative material and digital analysis of video footage proved the involvement of the 26-year-old foreign national in the incident. [He] was brought in [for questioning] on 30 July and confessed to his actions," the statement said.

Authorities have fast-tracked toxicological tests to determine the cause of death.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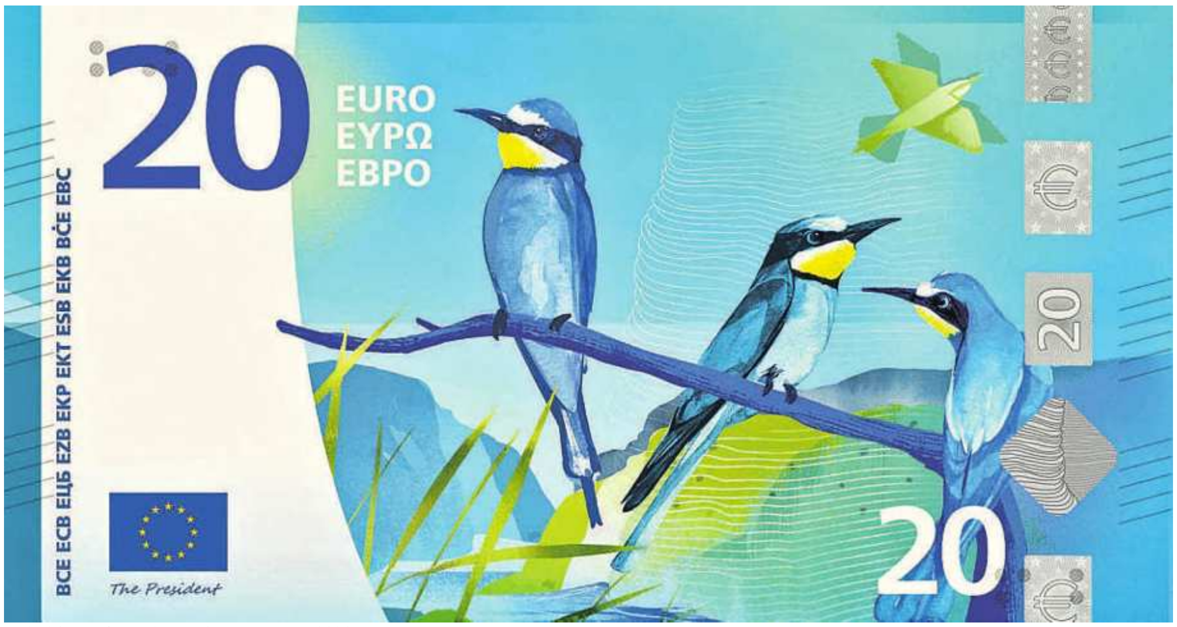
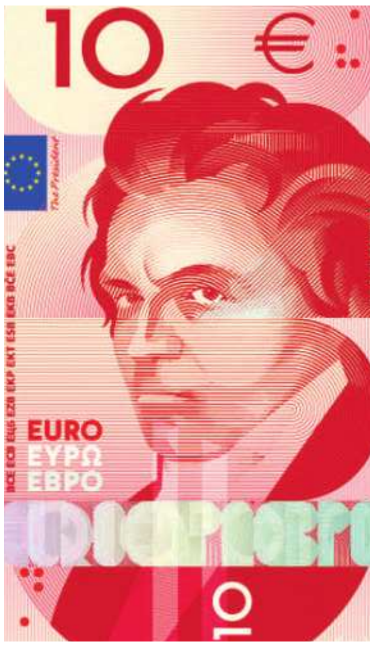
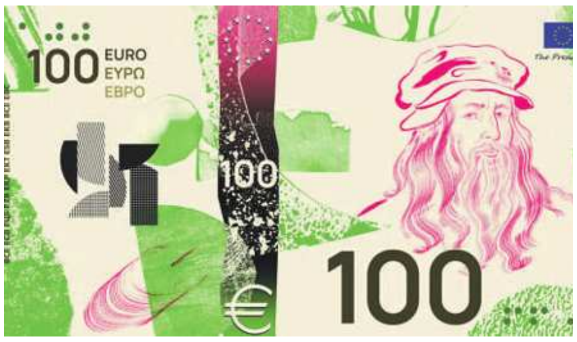
◀ *Cultural choices include Maria Callas (€5), Beethoven (€10) and Leonardo da Vinci (€100). Bird designs feature the avocet (€100) and the bee-eater (€20)*

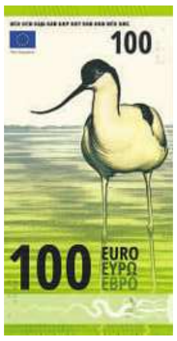


PHOTOGRAPHS: EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK 2026

On the money: EU decides on history or wildlife for banknote redesign







Philip Oltermann
European culture editor

Is Europe best represented by the bold intellect of Marie Curie, the sprawling imagination of Miguel de Cervantes and the intense musical genius of Ludwig van Beethoven? Or by a bee-eater and a migrating stork swooping across borderless plains and enjoying freedom of movement across European countries?

The quest to settle this issue has engaged a surprising number of people across the continent, after more than 6 million voted in a survey within just a week of its launch to determine whether the newly redesigned euro banknotes should depict cultural figures or birds.

The 10 proposals for a full redesign – the first since the single currency's paper money entered circulation in 2002 – were unveiled by the chair of the European Central Bank (ECB), Christine Lagarde, last week. They include five proposals on the culture theme and five on the wildlife theme.

Each offers a different graphic interpretation on colours and motifs for the €5, €10, €20, €50, €100 and €200 notes that were determined by the ECB in advance.

Europe's cultural life is represented on the front of the notes by the American-Greek soprano Maria Callas; the German composer Beethoven; the Polish-French scientist Curie; Cervantes, the author of Don Quixote; the Renaissance polymath Leonardo da Vinci; and the Austrian pacifist and women's liberation leader Bertha von Suttner.

The birds selected for the wildlife-themed notes are the wallcreeper, the kingfisher, the bee-eater, the white stork, the avocet and the northern gannet, over different landscapes typical of the continent.

Feedback from the survey on the ECB's website, which closes on 21 September, will feed into but not solely determine which design the central bank chooses as a winner at the end of 2026.

The new notes will not come into circulation until 2030 or 2031.

The 10 shortlisted designs, picked from 1,241 applications to an open call in 2025, are all by creatives who do not usually design banknotes, and some look radically different from paper money around the globe.

A Dutch book designer, Joost Grootens, has cropped the images of cultural figures tightly around their eyes, while Jan Robert Dünnwelle, a German illustrator, has rendered the same personalities in the free-flowing, sketchy style of a graphic novel.

In the French artist Isabelle Daëron's proposals, the birds are flying across a vertical layout rather than the more conventional horizontal one, as are those of Ville Tietäväinen, a Finnish graphic designer who has depicted the bird's journeys in sequence, progressively moving from the mountains to the sea.

Philippe Geoffroy, the head of section for new banknotes at the ECB, said: "The feedback from the public has been very clear. They want money that feels European." In Britain, the Bank of England drew some ire earlier this year when it announced that redesigned notes would depict wildlife instead of historical figures. To some commentators, the "apolitical" animal motifs epitomised the struggle to identify shared cultural rallying points in politically polarising times.

The new euro notes seem to take a step in the opposite direction. Until now, euro banknotes have deliberately depicted "neutral" motifs in order to avoid offending individual member nations.

"The main reason behind the redesign is to stay well ahead of counterfeiting," Geoffroy said. "But along the way we want to increase identification with the single currency and make it more graphically meaningful. We want to move away from neutrality."

The lineup of cultural icons is not only finely balanced to represent different corners of the eurozone (albeit with a glaring hole in the Baltics). It also showcases artists and thinkers who cannot be claimed by just one country, either because their work transcended borders or because of their migratory biography.

'It's about ambition for all': Powell says she wants to be a 'tiger mum' for young people

Education secretary Lucy Powell

Pippa Crerar
Political editor

Lucy Powell has said she wants to be an ambitious "tiger mum" for all young people, whatever their route through education, after the government was accused of dumbing down England's schools with plans to create more vocational routes.

The new education secretary said secondary pupils should be able to pursue academic excellence as well as high-quality vocational training, and it was a "false trade-off" to suggest schools could not provide both.

In an interview with the Guardian, Powell said she did not have "lower ambition" for those children following technical routes, and critics including the former Tory education secretary Michael Gove should recognise that their approach had left too many behind.

Andy Burnham told schools across England last week to adapt curriculums to the needs of local businesses as part of a drive to make technical and vocational skills as valued as academic qualifications and help tackle the jobs crisis for young people.

Powell said: "I absolutely don't want schools to dumb down. My kids might say I'm a tiger mum. You know, I'm a tiger mum for all our kids – every single child that's in our education system achieving excellence, achieving what they can do."

Powell said those arguing against a focus on vocational education were making a "false trade-off" by framing Labour's plans as a choice between knowledge and skills. "What I'm not going to oversee is some kind of lower ambition for some kids. It's about ambition for everybody."

Most of the criticism of her approach has come from Tory politicians who oversaw the system for years. "They have to take some responsibility for creating … a system that has left over a million young people now not in education, training or employment. The current approach has left too many behind."

She acknowledged headteachers were concerned about extra pressure on their budgets to provide vocational routes, saying she was "very conscious" of school funding, which took a hit during the austerity years. She said any specific new proposals would be fully funded.

With many teachers struggling, and potential strikes looming, Powell said she wanted a constructive relationship with the unions, and the government was already making changes to help ease the pressure, adding: "What I'll say to teachers is 'work with me.'"

Powell has been under pressure to row back on plans made by her predecessor, Bridget Phillipson, to overhaul the special educational needs and disabilities system, in particular limiting education, health and care plans to pupils with the most complex needs.

Powell signalled that she would stick to the plans, while accepting that the issue was creating worry and anxiety for many parents. "We can reassure them because this is about tilting the system so that you don't have to fight tooth and nail – that you get much earlier help."

Pressed on Labour's election pledge to recruit 6,500 teachers, which has since been watered down, she suggested the government was doing well against a lower target, and that a sharp drop in primary numbers reflected falling rolls in schools.

Asked about private schools, Powell took a less adversarial approach than her predecessor, saying it was up to parents to make their own decisions about where they sent their children. "I'm not here to worry about private schools. I'm here to worry about state schools," she said.

Powell batted away suggestions she was unhappy not to have been appointed deputy prime minister by Burnham, saying they had agreed she would continue to play a central role in Labour's political direction as education secretary.

There had been no purge of the Starmerites, she added, saying the new cabinet was representative of people across the party, and that, in contrast, Keir Starmer's cabinet had been too narrow. "That was one of the issues for Keir towards the end," she said. "His government wasn't necessarily one of all the traditions."

Powell also criticised Starmer's government for focusing too much on the Reform threat rather than Labour's own plan for the country. "What most people wanted to know was not what we thought about other political parties but what were we about," she said. "What has been refreshing is being on the front foot. Every day you're on the front foot is a day you're winning."

▲ *Pupils at Watford grammar school for boys. Lucy Powell has taken a less adversarial approach to private schools than her predecessor as education secretary, Bridget Phillipson* PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN

Women abused by Al Fayed confirmed as trafficking victims

Helena Horton

At least five victims of the former Harrods owner Mohamed Al Fayed have been confirmed by the Home Office as victims of human trafficking.

A group of survivors of abuse by the now-dead businessman had called for the Metropolitan police to make trafficking the main focus of its investigation, arguing that Fayed could not have committed his offences without a steady stream of women being sent to him by associates.

The women were victims of international and domestic trafficking, and one survivor told PA they had been recruited to a false role within Harrods. Two further victims were hired and then selected from the shop floor for abuse. These cases stretch from the 1990s to after the 2010 sale of Harrods. Officers are looking into who may have facilitated Fayed's crimes in an investigation known as Operation Cornpoppy.

One survivor, Justine, told PA she had felt "shellshocked" when she received the "conclusive grounds decision" in June that she had been a victim of modern slavery.

She added: "It's a really significant thing, getting that decision, seeing it in writing that you were a victim of modern slavery and trafficking is very … it's really shocking to read."

Another survivor, Isabella, who worked in the chair's office at Harrods in 2001, told PA: "He couldn't have done what he did without Harrods processing women to him and silencing them afterwards. It wasn't just Harrods, obviously. It was any entity that Fayed owned or had control of. It was his yachts, his aviation business, the Ritz Paris, his properties all over France and Monaco."

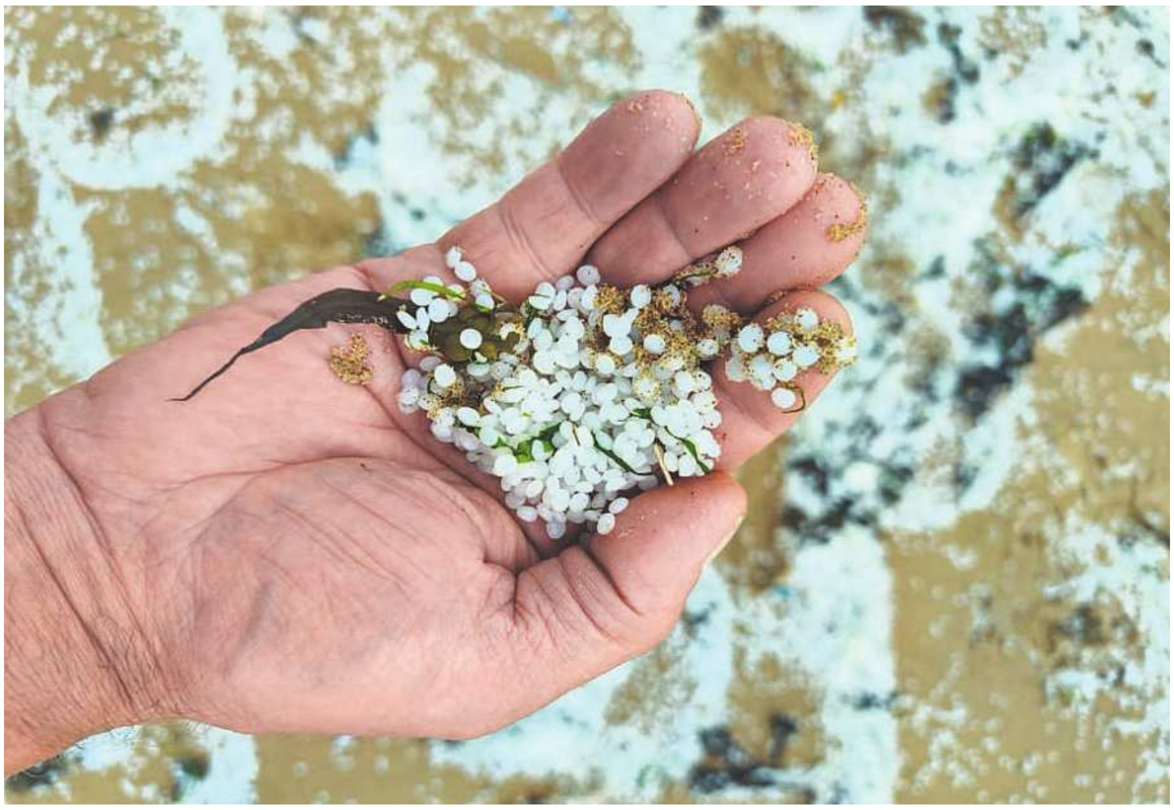
More than 400 allegations of sexual misconduct have been made against Fayed for the period between 1977 and 2014 – including claims of rape, sexual assault, human trafficking, false imprisonment, drugging, violence and forced abortions. The Egyptian businessman died in 2023 without having faced any charges.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct is examining complaints about the Met's handling of allegations against Fayed between 2018 and 2024.

A Harrods spokesperson said: "Harrods supports all survivors in their pursuit of justice and continues to work closely with the Met police on its investigation."

▲ *From left, Alice Laverty, Amy Ash, Helen Charlton and Lou Shackleton help clean up the beach in Whitley Bay* PHOTOGRAPH: MARK PINDER/THE GUARDIAN

▼ *Nurdles used to make plastic products can be mistaken for food by birds and marine wildlife*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALISTAIR LEADBETTER



‘It’s devastating’

Volunteers race to clear coastline of plastic pellets

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

‘You’ve got a local community that really cares about the coastline,” says Alice Laverty, reflecting on the huge army of volunteers that has taken to crisis-hit beaches in north-east England with passion and only the most basic tools. “They’ve all got a dustpan, a brush, a bucket, a kitchen sieve.”

On beaches from Cambois in Northumberland to Seaburn on Wearside up to 2,000 dedicated volunteers have been painstakingly sifting through sand to find tiny plastic pellets.

The lentil-sized pellets called nurdles have washed up on beaches after a ship collision on 19 July at the Port of Tyne, South Shields, led to 1bn of them spilling into the water. Campaigners estimate there were up to 25 tonnes of them.

The spill prompted anger and protests, and the north-east mayor, Kim McGuinness, has promised to make sure that shipowners contribute to what she said was a “pollution emergency”.

Since the collision the nurdles have washed up on numerous beaches in the region. Some days, nurdle drifts have been like soup, visibly scarring the landscape. Other days, people have had to get down on their hands and knees to find them - but when they do, they’re there.

Laverty, a Whitley Bay bookshop owner, was one of the first to respond. “I saw the horrendous pictures of millions of them floating down the Tyne and I went to the beach in the evening,” she says.

“I was literally the only person on the beach with a dustpan and brush and I could see people looking at me going … ‘what is she doing?’”

Fuelled by outrage and helped by WhatsApp and social media, there is now a more organised army of volunteers gathering at beaches in the mornings and evenings to help the cleanup. It is a race against the tides, and the only way for volunteers to do it is by painstakingly sifting the sand or shaking seaweed. People have been drawing squares and cleaning the beach section by section.

“It becomes quite addictive,” Laverty says. “I can’t walk past a nurdle without picking it up, and I reckon most Whitley Bay residents will be exactly the same.”

She says a friend had told her the Greek myth of Aphrodite punishing Psyche by mixing up different grains, seeds and lentils and setting her the impossible task of separating them by dawn. In the story, a sympathetic army of ants comes to the rescue. “Wouldn’t that be great,” says Laverty.

The official advice from councils is not to handle the pellets, but Laverty says there is a greater cause: “There’s no nurdle fairy; this needs to be cleaned up now,” she says. “An official response with specialist equipment and trained staff takes time, and concerns about insurance and liability could further delay cleanup operations.”

At Whitley Bay beach the Guardian talked to other volunteers determined to do their bit.

▲ *Nurdle collecting at Fish Quay Sands, North Shields. Left, volunteers are armed with dustpans, brushes and, below, sieves to clear up the plastic pollution after a shipping collision*
PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK PINDER/ THE GUARDIAN

Helen Charlton, a business academic from Cramlington in Northumberland, says: “This is our home. I’m north-east born and bred and I’m incredibly proud of this region, and I’m incredibly proud of the industry and commerce here.

“It’s not that we shouldn’t have shipping on the Tyne because we absolutely should. But the two have to coexist.”

Lou Shackleton, a life and work coach from Whitley Bay, says the nurdles bring multiple dangers. “Everything is interconnected. The people that are fishing need the fish to be there and healthy. The seals need the fish. I heard a boat broke down yesterday because of nurdles affecting the engine. It’s the summer holidays; there’ll be people in the sea, kids playing.

“I have a five-year-old. I don’t want him to be still finding nurdles on the beach in 10 years’ time.”

Amy Ash, a user experience designer, has created an app to help organise and mobilise the volunteers.

“I surf, I swim, I’ve got two kids,” she says. “It is absolutely devastating that these things are on the beach. I really do not want this to be forgotten about.”

Nurdles are tiny, disc-shaped plastic pellets that are the raw material to manufacture most plastic products. Animals can easily mistake them for food with deadly consequences, campaigners say.

The environmental charity Fidra, which works to end plastic and chemical pollution, says they are a global problem. Last year it found plastic nurdles at 84% of sites of special scientific interest.

The Port of Tyne, HM Coastguard, the Environment Agency, local councils and contractors are all involved in cleaning up the spill. But yesterday about 3,000 volunteer hours had been logged and 285kg of nurdles had been recovered by the “people’s army”. A call was to go out for trained local teams to be allowed to help clear nurdles from rivers as well as beaches.

Burnham: I'll be relentless on small boat crossings after Ceuta crisis

Alexandra Topping
Political correspondent

Andy Burnham has said he will be "relentless" in tackling small boat crossings after tens of thousands of migrants entered Spanish territory, but said "safe routes" for refugees were necessary to tackle trafficking gangs.

Speaking during a visit to Dover, the prime minister said he had been told by his Spanish counterpart, Pedro Sánchez, that approximately 98% of the estimated 50,000 people who entered Spain's north African territory of Ceuta last week had been returned to Morocco.

Burnham added: "Of course, there's a broader issue about the Schengen area and our relationship with it. I would want to be in regular dialogue with the EU on those issues."

Asked if he wanted to change the tone of the debate on the issue by stressing the need for safe routes, he said the UK had to "deal with the issue rather than play politics with the issue" and make changes that would reassure the public.

"The public don't like the idea that the border looks like it's not controlled. We need to bring back that control, but also we need to offer support for people who genuinely need it," he said. "It's about changing the whole approach, and slowly but surely we are putting in place those building blocks of a very different approach to this issue."

Wednesday marked the busiest day for small boat crossings across the Channel so far this year, with 752 people arriving in the UK. Official provisional figures suggest 14,526 people have entered the UK so far this year. This is 43% lower than at the same time last year (25,436) and down 14% on the same period in 2024 (16,903).

"Progress is being made, but we're not complacent," Burnham said.

He added that since the start of 2025, the number of National Crime Agency officers tackling organised immigration crime had more than doubled from 376 to almost 800. Shabana Mahmood, the home secretary, said the government's work to tackle small boat crossings were beginning to "bear fruit".

She has faced fierce opposition from within the Labour party over proposed immigration reforms, including doubling the time it takes to qualify for indefinite leave to remain from five to 10 years. But, on a visit to the National Crime Agency headquarters in Stratford, she said reform was needed "to address the pull factors that draw people into boats in the Channel". She added: "I want to change the calculus. I want them to change their mind about whether they get on the boat in the first place."

She rejected calls to copy Spain's response to the Ceuta crossings, in which has tens of thousands of people were returned to Morocco without processing any asylum claims. That was possible because Morocco and Spain share a land border and have an agreement in place. People smuggling and shared waters of the Channel made that "trickier in many ways", she said.

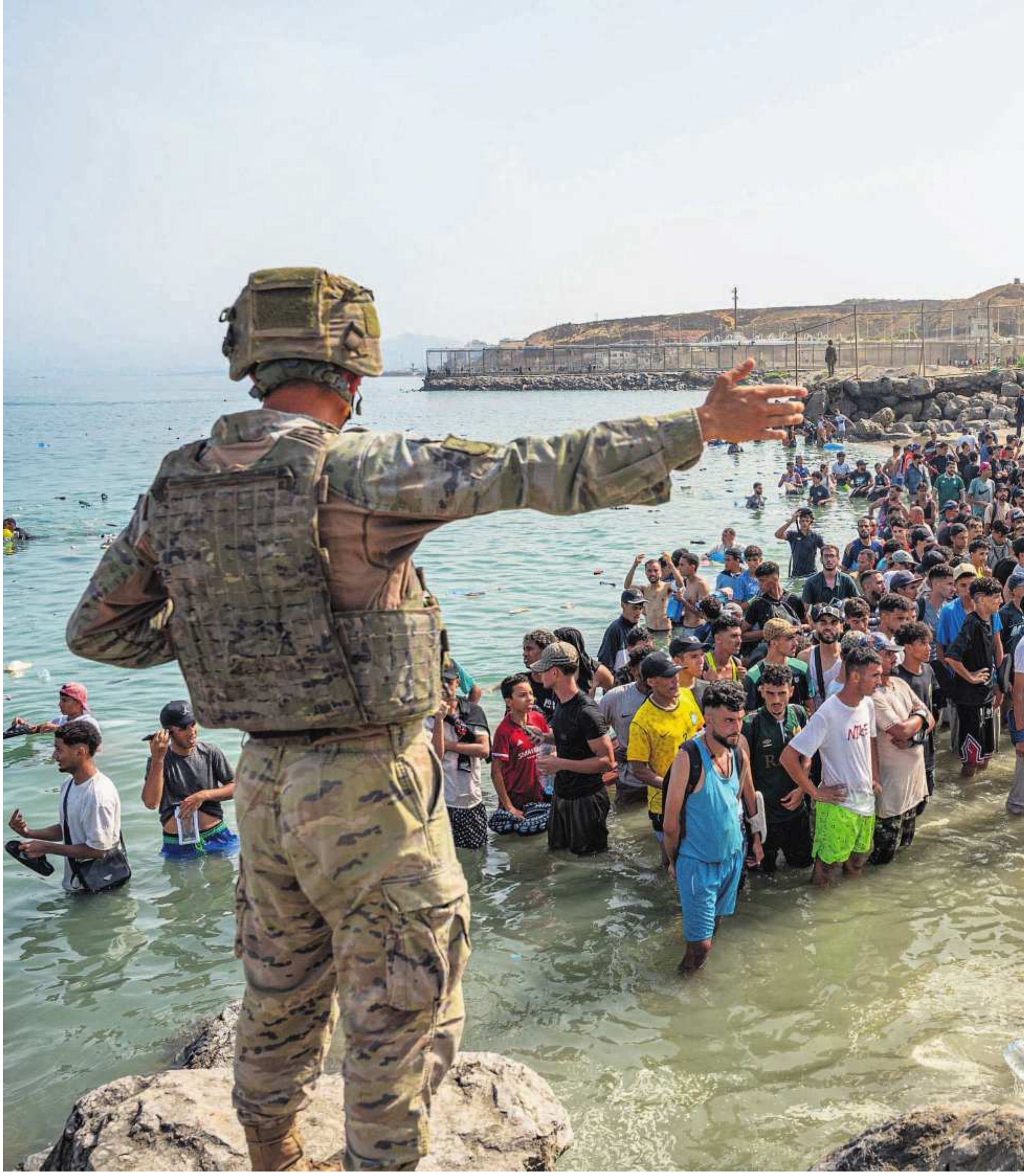
At least 72 people died trying to reach Ceuta, with some drowning while others were crushed when attempting to climb the border fence.

Sánchez called the arrivals "a violation of Spain's territorial integrity". It took place over the course of 24 hours from Thursday, overwhelmed the city of 85,000 people, triggered a political crisis for Madrid and led to an angry reaction from some EU countries, including calls for Spain to be suspended from the Schengen free-movement zone.

On Saturday, Spanish police installed a 500-metre (1,640ft) floating barrier off its border with Morocco to prevent others from making their way around the border. .

EU ministers have convened emergency talks which will take place tomorrow. The leaders of 22 EU countries have demanded an emergency response to the Ceuta arrivals, citing the need to prevent further uncontrolled crossings.

◀ *Andy Burnham in Dover yesterday, where he said safe routes were necessary to tackle trafficking* PHOTOGRAPH: JACK TAYLOR/AP



Border chaos: 'Moroccan police were shouting, "Go, go, go! Run into Spain"'

Continued *from page 1*

overwhelmed. "Young men were running through the streets, flooding every corner," he said.

By the time a second taxi took El Abbas to Fnideq, the town bordering Ceuta, he realised that the usual blockades and checkpoints preventing people without European documents from even approaching the frontier had been removed. "The Moroccan police were shouting at us: 'Go, go, go! Run now, run into Spain,'" he said. "The night before, they were beating people. But that morning they were letting us through. Nothing made sense."

Despite the crowds, El Abbas noticed the police were only letting Moroccans cross over. "All the sub-Saharan migrants were being pushed back by force." He reached the border at 2.45pm on Wednesday. By 3pm, after a short swim, he was standing on Spanish soil. Not everyone was so lucky.

"In just 10 minutes in the water, I saw four people floating dead in Moroccan waters," he said. "People were pulling their bodies out." They were among at least 72 people who drowned or were crushed trying to reach the Spanish territory.

El Abbas is one of the 50,000 or so people to have crossed into Ceuta this week, in what Spain's prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, described as "a violation of Spain's territorial integrity".

▶ *Authorities in Ceuta on Friday, where thousands of people arrived by sea from Morocco* PHOTOGRAPH: MARIO MORAN/JNA/ZUMA/SHUTTERSTOCK

▼ *Migrants arrive at the Ceuta border, some on foot, others by swimming* PHOTOGRAPHS: MARIO MORAN/JNA/ZUMA PRESS WIRE/SHUTTERSTOCK

▲ *Spanish authorities attributed the influx of migrants in Ceuta to 'human-trafficking mafias'* PHOTOGRAPH: MARCOS MORENO/ANADOLU/GETTY

Madrid has attributed the latest influx to "human-trafficking mafias" that have taken advantage of a decision by Spain's supreme court, which recently ruled that those intercepted at sea while trying to enter Ceuta or Melilla - the other Spanish territory on the north African coast - could not be summarily returned under special rules.

But there has also been speculation that the Moroccan authorities may have opened the border to signal their displeasure at Sánchez's recent visit to Algeria, which supports efforts to free the disputed territory of Western Sahara from Moroccan occupation.

Morocco's ambassador to Spain, Karima Benyaich Millán, said his government was not happy about the mass crossing, adding that it hoped those in Ceuta would return.

Moroccan government sources told the Europa Press news agency that the surge of people entering Ceuta was down to "criminal organisations" and insisted that Moroccan cooperation with Spain remained "exemplary".

In May 2021, Morocco loosened border controls - allowing 10,000 people to cross into Ceuta over the course of two days - during a diplomatic standoff triggered after Spain allowed a Western Sahara independence leader to be treated for Covid-19 in Spain.

El Abbas said he had never stopped dreaming of returning to Spain, where he had worked mainly in the hospitality sector for 14 years. Since being deported to Morocco in 2019, he has lived apart from his wife and four daughters, who remain in the northern Spanish city of Bilbao. "I never stopped thinking about coming back," he said. "In Morocco, I was alive, but I wasn't really living."

The return has been bittersweet.

> *'In just 10 minutes in the water, I saw four people floating dead in Moroccan waters'*
>
> **Youssef El Abbas**
> *A Moroccan in Ceuta*

When he swam ashore in Ceuta, a Spanish Guardia Civil officer extended a hand to pull him from the sea. But that gesture of aid eventually gave way to one of violence. Three days after arriving, the group of people he was with were surrounded by a military patrol and beaten. "The same hand that helped me out of the water was the one that later hit me," he said.

El Abbas's story is hardly unique. Although more than 48,000 people had crossed back into Morocco by Friday night, hundreds are still sleeping in parks, public squares and on pavements. It appears to be almost impossible for migrants to leave Ceuta for mainland Spain.

Said, 17, from Casablanca, had joined the Ceuta-bound crowds when he heard the border was open. But now the jubilation had given way to reality and all he had was a bottle of water and a carton of yoghurt a local resident had given him. Said and the other teenagers with him said no one would sell them food or allow them into shops as they did not speak Spanish.

Three days after the mass influx, Ceuta is slowly trying to recover a sense of normality. By early evening on Saturday, cafe terraces were beginning to fill again. Many of the remaining arrivals are being tended to by Ceuta residents, who hand out bottles of water, sandwiches, blankets and clothes.

Such shows of solidarity have been threatened by the arrival of far-right politicians and a neo-Nazi group, all keen to use the humanitarian crisis for their own ends. "They're going to exploit our feelings to claim the credit and say they defended Ceuta," said Malika, a local woman. "We don't want them here."

Fatima Hamed Hossain, a member of Ceuta's assembly, fears that the strain created by the crisis has deepened divisions within the city. "Everything we've lived through has created tensions between neighbours," she said. "That's exactly what feeds the far right."

As a caravan of people returned back over the border, Said's mind was on the future. His goal is simple: to get a place in a protection centre, learn Spanish and, once he turns 18, find work as a barber.

What he fears most is ending up without legal documentation and seeing that plan collapse before it has even begun. Leaving is not on his agenda, however. "All I need," he said, "is a chance."

EU citizens At least 100 told they no longer have right to UK residency

Lisa O'Carroll
Senior correspondent

The UK Home Office has started stripping some EU citizens of their post-Brexit residency rights in a move that has raised concerns about Britain's compliance with the EU withdrawal agreement.

The department has told at least 100 people they were given residency rights "in error", disrupting their lives just as they came to the end of their five-year pre-settled status and were about to upgrade to permanent settled status.

A Portuguese woman working in the NHS and researching a PhD in Britain said her life had been turned upside down after receiving such a letter from the Home Office.

She was granted pre-settled status under the EU settlement scheme, similar to 1.3m others who had been in the country for fewer than five years before the UK left the EU.

"I feel so overwhelmed. I can lose my job, I maybe don't have the right even to rent the property that I'm living in now, because, of course, I have to prove my right to live here. It's just very stressful," said Gabriela, whose name has been changed.

The Home Office is now reviewing cases of those who are required to apply to have their status upgraded to full settled status, including children, non-EEA citizens and anyone who arrived after 31 December 2020.

It declined to say how many people it had written to, but a freedom of information request by the3million campaign group revealed 95 citizens were contacted in March alone.

Monique Hawkins, the acting chief executive of the3million, said the impact of the Home Office's retrospective review had been devastating for many. The group feared there might be hundreds of thousands like Gabriela who could be hit by similar letters and fear removal from the country.

The Independent Monitoring Authority, the statutory body set up to monitor the implementation of the EU citizens chapter of the withdrawal agreement, said it had "raised concerns with the Home Office that the policy may be incompatible" with the agreement.

Hawkins said under the agreement status "should only be removed if it is genuinely proportionate to do so" but "the Home Office is simply sidestepping that … entirely".

The Home Office said it had a "longstanding" policy not to routinely comment on individual cases.

It added that individuals could apply to stay "under any immigration route available to them" if the status had been granted in error and the individual was unable to prove it was "granted correctly" after being given and all opportunities to do so.

PM focused on barring child rapists from early prison release scheme

Alexandra Topping
Political correspondent

Andy Burnham is focused on preventing the release of child sexual abuse perpetrators under the government's early release scheme, as urgent talks on which serious criminals could be exempted go down to the wire.

Ministers said they had 24 hours to assess which criminals could be released early to free up prison space, with every exemption weighed up against the threat of the criminal justice system's collapse.

Burnham halted the controversial plans to release thousands of killers, rapists and sex offenders from prison in September to ease prison overcrowding. He is keen to make as many exceptions as the small headroom in the prison estate will allow, the Guardian understands.

The prime minister's focus is on preventing child rapists and other perpetrators of serious sexual abuse from being released early after ministers heard the concerns of victims' representatives and support services. They warned that a failure to put in place safeguards for abuse victims would put them at particular risk.

A review of the scheme is expected to conclude within the next 24 hours to give the prison service time to prepare, with a final decision on exemptions still to be made.

Ministers were keenly aware that if no action was taken prisons would run out of space, and exempting some criminals was likely to lead to further calls for others to be kept behind bars, sources told the Guardian.

David Lammy, the former justice secretary, who brought forward the Sentencing Act that paved the way for the releases, has said failing to implement it could leave no capacity in jails in England and Wales by November.

◀ *Wandsworth jail in London. Some say the criminal justice system could 'collapse under its own weight'*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW AITCHISON/GETTY IMAGES

The early release scheme – accompanied by a significant expansion in electronic tagging of offenders – is still expected to take place this autumn, with an initial group of about 700, despite warnings by probation officers of potential chaos. It is likely to cause a headache for Burnham as he faces Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative leader, in the House of Commons for the first time. "If we don't take any action we will run out of room – it's not sustainable at all," said a government source.

The family of PC Andrew Harper expressed outrage that his killers could be eligible for release, with his mother, Debbie Adlam, saying the proposed inclusion of two of her son's killers – Jessie Cole and Albert Bowers – was "another letdown" for their family.

Sentencing laws were passed under Keir Starmer's government to ease a looming prison overcrowding crisis that ministers said could seize up the criminal justice system.

Under the Sentencing Act, from September some serious offenders will be eligible for release halfway through their sentences rather than two-thirds of the way through. Those convicted of less serious crimes can be freed after serving a third of their sentence instead of 40%.

The law also restricts the use of short-term prison stays, which will be replaced with probation and community orders.

Claire Waxman, the victims' commissioner, met Alex Norris, the justice secretary, on Wednesday and told the Telegraph she welcomed his acknowledgment that victims had been let down and was "cautiously more hopeful" about progress on answering her concerns.

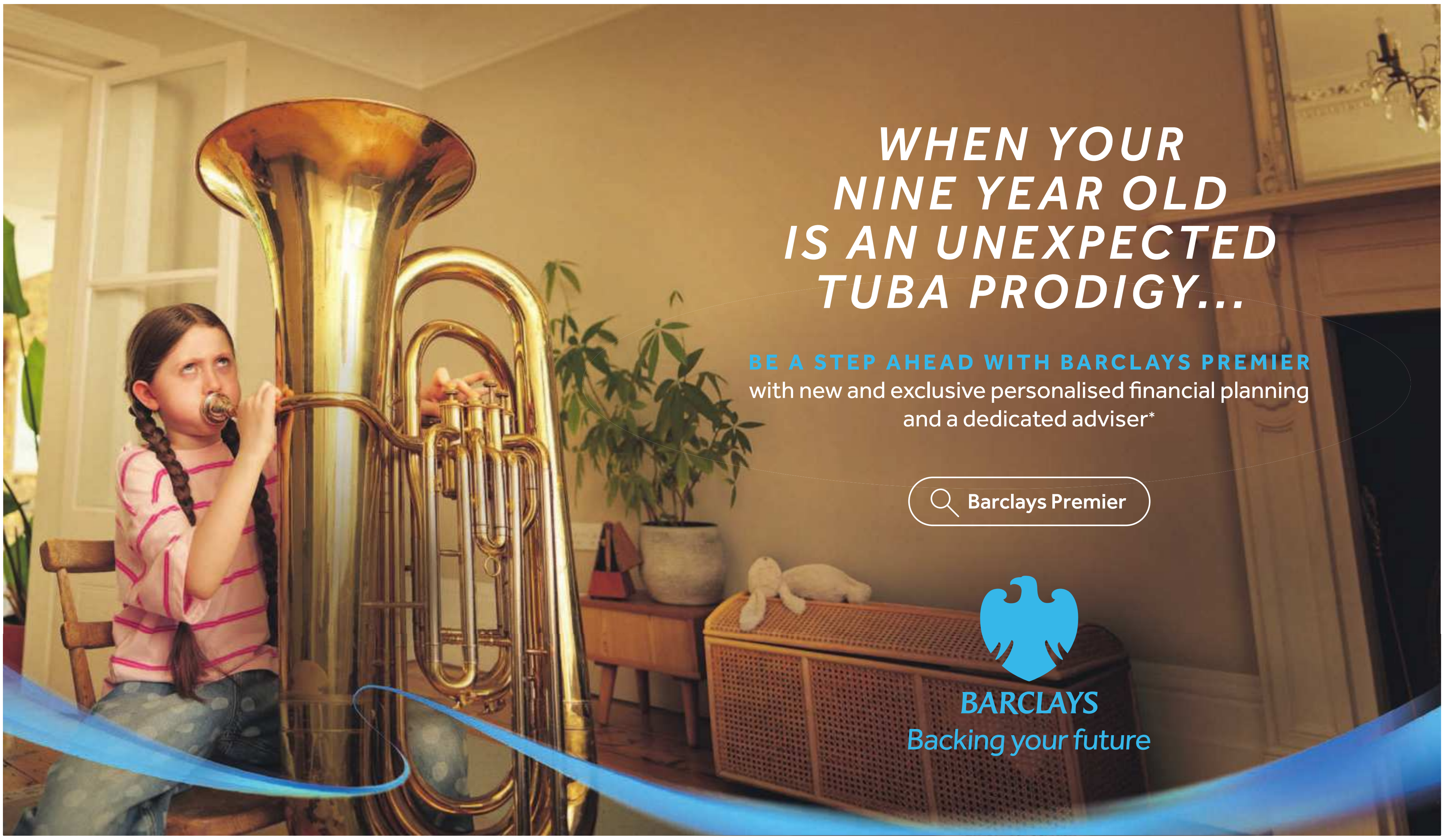
Prison reform groups and some government officials and politicians said abandoning measures to ease overcrowding could lead to the criminal justice system "collapsing under its own weight".

Ciara Bergman, the chief executive of Rape Crisis England and Wales, said centres had been supporting "scores" of victims through the "distress and terror of finding out that their rapists and abusers were due to be released … or in some cases already had been".

The Ministry of Justice said: "Protecting the public will always be our top priority. That's why we are taking decisive action to fix the prison crisis we inherited while investing record sums to support victims.

"But after 14 years where prison places increased by just 500, our prisons were days away from running out of places. This would have caused the total breakdown of law and order. We are pulling every lever to protect the public and cut crime – building prison places at the fastest rate since the Victorian era, launching the biggest ever expansion of tagging to toughen community punishment and giving victims a say in the strict licence conditions of offenders.

"We have paused changes due to start in September to conduct an urgent review to make sure we get this policy right for victims without running out of prison spaces."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IS AN UNEXPECTED
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Europe, Gaza, climate What Miliband intends to do at the Foreign Office

Patrick Wintour
Diplomatic editor

Extraordinarily, given the importance of geopolitics, the office of foreign secretary has sometimes appeared a consolation prize in British politics, perhaps reflecting the transfer of responsibility to Downing Street or the Cabinet Office.

That is not how Ed Miliband views the job. His allies say suggestions he nurses resentment after he was deprived of the chance to be chancellor misunderstand his grasp of the policy challenges ahead. “Ed has an immense appetite to get things done and is relishing being in this job,” one said. “Ed will be a policy-driven foreign secretary.”

To that end, he is preparing a distinct agenda on relations with the EU over the next decade, Britain’s chairing of the G20 next year and the climate crisis. Miliband is also determined to contribute to some of the big debates about shaping the international order of the future - debates that may take him into difficult territory given the volatility of the US alliance.

Palestine may take longer to address, partly owing to the Israeli elections and the sudden glimmer of progress over Hamas’s disarmament, but his instincts are clear. In 2014, as Labour leader, he urged his MPs to vote to recognise Palestine as a state.

Acutely conscious that he is the 10th foreign secretary since William Hague stood aside in 2014, Miliband also arrives without a Foreign Office permanent secretary after the sacking of Olly Robbins, and with some staff on a rolling strike over the large job cuts that Robbins had said he would impose.

But Miliband, working with Hamish Falconer, the new Europe minister based in the Foreign Office, intends to be closely involved in talks on Britain’s relations with the EU, since he regards a solution to that relationship as the biggest question facing the UK. His involvement will give the Foreign Office greater influence in the Europe debate than it had under Keir Starmer, when the Cabinet Office was the sole proprietor of negotiations.

Miliband represents a Eurosceptic constituency and remains bound by Labour’s manifesto red lines not to enter the single market or customs union in this parliament. But that does not prevent him from seeking to influence Andy Burnham’s longer term thinking about where the UK’s relationship with the EU should be in 10 or 15 years.

THE ART OF DIPLOMACY
LE QUAI D'ORSAY

▲ *Ed Miliband, the new foreign secretary, is said by allies to have an ‘immense appetite’ to get things done*
PHOTOGRAPH: LEON NEAL/GETTY IMAGES

“Having a closer relationship with Europe is a key foreign policy priority to protect our national security and grow our economy,” an ally said. “Ed will be working in lockstep with No 10 and Hamish Falconer to make this happen. He sees Europe as at the heart of this agenda.”

Friends said Miliband wanted to find a way to revive the ailing G20, a largely economic multilateral body that has been steadily declining in influence since 2008.

In his final days at No 10, Starmer appointed Gordon Brown to act as his special envoy on global finance and cooperation in advance of the G20, and Brown will retain the role. Stewart Wood, who acted as a foreign policy adviser during the Brown premiership, has also been appointed to the Foreign Office as a minister in the Lords, and will bring experience and intellect to the role.

With Britain due to chair the postponed illicit finance summit in December before taking over the G20, ideas such as a global wealth tax and greater transparency in overseas financial holdings are all being promoted. But the secrecy of Britain’s overseas territories has for a decade been a millstone in the UK’s call to combat corruption.

Kirsty McNeill, the international development minister and a former executive director of Save the Children, has been asked to wrestle with the impact of large aid cuts. She has previously said the UK will not regain credibility on aid unless it sets out a path for returning aid spending to 0.7% of GDP. Aid will fall to 0.3% next year and Burnham’s £2 bus fare cap is being funded by a raid on the aid budget. The G20 at least provides a creative way for her to build alliances to tackle unjust debts and illicit financial flows.

A global wealth tax was proposed during the Brazilian presidency of the G20 in 2024 after a study commissioned from the French economist Gabriel Zucman. “There is overwhelming public support for this idea,” Zucman said at the report’s launch. “Ten years ago, nobody believed 130 countries would support a minimum tax on multinationals. It was thought of as utopian.”

The report said billionaires were paying an average of 0.3% tax on their wealth. The average wealth of the top 0.0001% of individuals had grown by 7.1% a year on average between 1987 and 2024, increasing the share of global wealth held by billionaires from 3% to 14%.

Donald Trump’s G20 summit is due in Miami in December, by which time he could be diminished by the midterm congressional elections. There has been a slow drop-off in world leaders attending the G20, partly owing to geopolitical rifts over Ukraine and questions over its value, but by next year the economic fallout from the Iran war may require economic and political coordination.

Miliband is not, meanwhile, expected to act quickly on Burnham’s admission that Labour needed to “do better” on Gaza. Burnham suggested action on trade with illegal Israeli settlements was on his agenda, but Foreign Office diplomats have questioned the enforceability of such a ban.

A debate is under way as to whether European states would best help the political parties opposed to Benjamin Netanyahu in the October elections by imposing fresh sanctions, underlining the Israeli prime minister’s diplomatic isolation, or whether he would use international disapproval to his domestic advantage.

The pressure from the Labour backbenches for a more robust policy that treats international law with the same seriousness in the Middle East as Britain does in Ukraine is intense. A letter from 80 parliamentarians coordinated by the MP Kim Johnson called on Burnham to impose comprehensive sanctions on Israel and recognise the findings of the UN commission of inquiry that Israel is committing genocide. Burnham has said it is for the international courts to make such determinations.

But a consequential question will be how Miliband retains his progressive credibility and remains on good terms with the US state department under Trump. Wood, a sceptic about past UK foreign military interventions, strongly opposed the US attack on Iran.

But the need to retain a modicum of US support for Ukraine has, ever since Trump’s election, been seen as an essential UK foreign policy priority, one that has required compromises and often involved working with the Republican senator Lindsey Graham, who died last month, a vocal supporter of Ukraine. That is unlikely to change in the short term.

National Gallery facing 'divisive' staff claims

Dalya Alberge

The National Gallery's security staff, of whom the vast majority are from ethnic minority backgrounds, are facing shocking segregation, a senior curator has claimed.

Its outsourced guards are barred from the building's high-quality "hub" - bright and airy recreation rooms that are available to the institution's mainly white employees.

They are not allowed to take their breaks there or sit in that area. Instead, they are relegated to a "stifling" basement space with broken furniture, ongoing problems with rodents and no natural light or air-conditioning.

The curator, who wished to remain anonymous, told the Guardian: "It's almost become a running joke within the National Gallery. Security staff are being treated like second-class citizens."

The insider said that gallery employees, from curators to marketing staff, use the "hub", which was created in previously under-used spaces between and beneath the gallery's exhibition halls, while outsourced security staff are prevented from doing so.

They said: "There's this beautiful hub area. You've got all the in-house largely white staff in there. This has got potentially divisive for the gallery in the sense that the poor facilities in a basement area are used by black and Asian security staff."

While the hub has a heavily-subsidised canteen and its own chef, the basement space is described as "dingy, dirty and dark" with a kiosk offering little more than a KitKat and no cooked food.

"It wasn't meant for people," the curator said. "It was meant for storage."

The National Gallery has reportedly told them that restricting the hub access is about avoiding overcrowding, but the security staff are still barred during weekends and holidays when there are virtually no National Gallery employees using it.

Security staff are represented by the PCS union and believe they are being treated with "absolute contempt", warning of the basement space: "Most dangerously, it is unventilated and accessible only by ducking under pipes."

Security staff are also said to feel the gallery is putting the collection at risk in expecting an individual to guard as many as four rooms at once.

One observer said that guards can only be in one room at a time, and that it is easy to distract them. Security incidents in recent years have included activists from Just Stop Oil hurling tomato soup over Van Gogh's Sunflowers and attacking Velázquez's Rokeby Venus.

On 1 July, PCS wrote to Gabriele Finaldi, the National Gallery's director, arguing that forcing a largely black and Asian workforce into the basement is "potentially discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010". PCS is still awaiting a reply.

Nick Marro, PCS Culture Group secretary, told the Guardian: "There is no excuse for the two-tier workforce… Our members deserve equal treatment."

Outsourced security staff are employed by CIS Security, which declined to comment.

The National Gallery said security staff do not have access to the Hub offices. This has been the position since those offices were established due to wider space constraints, with dedicated facilities provided elsewhere in the Gallery for security staff and other contractors.

They said CIS had recently conducted a staff survey on workplace facilities and is currently implementing improvements in response to feedback received.

"The Gallery closely monitors its estate and works with specialist contractors to manage and address any pest-control issues as part of its routine facilities management programme," the gallery said.

"We do not comment on security operations, staffing levels or deployment arrangements, as these are kept under constant review and discussing them publicly could compromise security."

▼ *A member of security staff and a visitor in the National Gallery*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW BRACKENBURY/ SHUTTERSTOCK

Child murderer had evaded a previous arrest warrant

Neha Gohil

Cleveland police failed to arrest a paedophile for breaching a non-molestation order 18 months before he murdered and sexually assaulted his girlfriend's two-year-old daughter, Teesside crown court has heard.

Isabelle Welsh died on 14 September 2025 after what police described as a "campaign of violence".

The toddler's mother, Alexandra Walker, 26, and Walker's boyfriend, Harrison Simpson, 22, were convicted of murder and child cruelty at Teesside crown court on 30 July.

Cleveland police admitted that officers failed to execute a warrant issued by Teesside magistrates court for Simpson's arrest in March 2024, according to the Sunday Times. Simpson had failed to attend court for breaching a non-molestation order.

It is understood the non-molestation order was in place after reports Simpson had threatened a woman.

Cleveland police said in a statement: "Multiple inquiries and arrest attempts were carried out to try to locate and arrest him, but these proved unsuccessful."

Additional reporting **PA Media**

▲ *Isabelle Welsh was sexually assaulted by Harrison Simpson*

Writers and scientists join effort to save Jodrell Bank observatory

Geneva Abdul

More than 100 artists, writers and scientists have called for the UK government to save the "world's clearest eyes on the sky", after funding for the network of radio telescopes at Jodrell Bank Observatory was slashed.

The band New Order, the Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield and the poet laureate, Simon Armitage, are among those calling on the prime minister, Andy Burnham, to save the deep space observatory, which includes the Grade I-listed Lovell telescope, prized by astronomers who study galaxies, star formation and planets beyond the solar system.

Last week the observatory's funder, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), said it would withdraw funding for the e-Merlin network, the UK's national radio astronomy facility at Jodrell Bank, when the current agreement ends in March 2028.

"We believe that to shut it down to save just £2.8m a year is foolish and shortsighted," says the letter to Burnham as well as the business secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, and the head of UKRI.

The letter argues that to close the home of e-Merlin would be to poke out "some of the world's clearest eyes on the sky". The Lovell telescope tracked the Sputnik launch in 1957 and is at the centre of a global project tasked with mapping the first billion years of the universe.

Scientists have also called the decision a blow to UK astronomy, with observations at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire due to end completely unless other funding is found. The move threatens 28 jobs at the observatory and will affect nearly 3,000 researchers. Further cuts were announced for dozens of facilities, instruments and projects, which are expected to result in about 800 job losses.

The UKRI has an annual budget of nearly £10bn. The drop in funding is the latest in a rolling package of cuts from the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), which it funds. The STFC needs to make substantial savings as a result of cost overruns, soaring electricity and staff costs, and high foreign exchange rates for international collaborations.

The letter continues: "This beacon of science is more ambitious than ever, with exciting plans already under way that will ensure the UK's relevance and leadership in the rapidly evolving domain of science exploration and utilisation."

It argues that continued funding of Jodrell Bank would ensure vital contributions to global safety, including tracking space debris, destructive solar flares, satellites and asteroids.

The observatory hosts the headquarters of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO), a project to map the first billion years of the universe with sister telescopes in South Africa and Western Australia.

"Do we really want SKAO discoveries to be announced from an HQ alongside what would be the world's largest disused radio telescope?" the letter says. "We ask that you find funding for it immediately, so that the unique and essential services it provides can continue without interruption, and so that this important source of national pride and global scientific respect is saved."

A spokesperson for the STFC previously said the body had "undertaken a rigorous prioritisation process to focus investment on the areas that will deliver the greatest long-term scientific capability, impact and value for the UK".

◀ *The Lovell radio telescope at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire, which is facing closure amid government funding cuts*
PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND/ THE GUARDIAN

‘Glasto on wheels’

Celebration of Welsh culture returns to its roots after 850 years

Bethan McKernan
Wales correspondent

▲ *The 5-metre puppet of Lord Rhys walks around Cardigan after being awoken from his deep sleep; left, the folk-rock band Darogân playing at the festival* PHOTOGRAPHS: JOANN RANDLES/ THE GUARDIAN

By 1176, Lord Rhys ap Gruffydd, a medieval Welsh prince, had become one of the most powerful rulers the country had ever known. He had successfully banished Norman invaders from his lands, made peace with King Henry II and rebuilt Cardigan castle in stone.

Prosperous and secure, he threw a grand holiday tournament, inviting bards and musicians to play and compete under his patronage in the first recorded eisteddfod, roughly, a “sitting together” - a tradition that still lives on today.

This year’s national eisteddfod, a celebration of Welsh language, culture and creativity, has returned to its roots near Lord Rhys’s castle for its 850th birthday.

The eisteddfod is the oldest and one of the largest touring cultural events in Europe, moving between north and south Wales each year. This year’s Eisteddfod y Garreg Las - meaning blue rock, after the celebrated bluestone in the nearby Preseli hills that was used to construct the inner circle of Stonehenge - features more than 1,000 events and activities running until 8 August and is expected to attract 150,000 visitors.

“The eisteddfod is Glastonbury on wheels, basically, so I don’t know why it goes so under the radar in the rest of the UK,” said Marc Rees, the creative director who has brought Lord Rhys back to life as a 5-metre puppet for this year’s event.

“It’s this massive festival of music and poetry and dancing and some incredible bands: the Super Furry Animals are playing this year. It has a different character every year and it’s always so joyful.”

Lord Rhys, created with input from the community by Cardigan’s Theatr Byd Bach, has been touring the area after being “awoken” from his deep sleep in St David’s Cathedral, visiting towns and villages around the area before the eisteddfod’s opening on Saturday. Travelling with him have been this year’s crown and chair - the traditional prizes for the best free-verse poem, since Lord Rhys awarded a chair at his table to the first winner - as well as Teifi, his faithful hunting dog.

Since this year’s location was announced in 2024, local fundraising committees have raised £400,000 for staging the event, and hundreds of volunteers have prepared the site near the village of Llantwd for this week’s festivities.

John Davies, chair of Eisteddfod y Garreg Las’s executive committee, said: “I hope that Lord Rhys himself would have enjoyed the trip … 850 years is a long time, and it is amazing that the eisteddfod is still developing and evolving every year and is a dynamic and modern festival that offers something for everyone.”

After Lord Rhys’s time, bardic schools in Wales were closed during the Edwardian conquest, and eisteddfodau to some extent fell into abeyance.

The tradition enjoyed a revival in the 18th century thanks to London-based Welsh literary and cultural societies, and the modern iteration owes much to the Gorsedd Cymru - at the time a secret society of poets, writers and musicians, heavily influenced by druidism and mysticism.

Iolo Morganwg, an eccentric antiquarian and poet who founded the Gorsedd, came up with much of what he said was the modern eisteddfod’s ancient lore and history while high on laudanum - but his colourful and imaginative creation proved enormously popular, and lives on in the pageantry today.

“It’s like the eisteddfod has had a homecoming,” said Naomi Chiffi, 45, from Tenby. “My kids are all in Welsh-medium education; the first Welsh school in Tenby opened a decade ago now. Events like this on our doorstep show them that the language is a living, fun thing.”

The Wilyman family, visiting from Haverfordwest, said they were delighted to be close to the festival this year; mum Elliw, 48, is taking part in several competitions throughout the week.

“We’ve been fundraising since February,” she said. “It’s so nice to see it all come together.”

Opera review Goth energy and gore in lurid Wagner revival

Parsifal
Bayreuth festival theatre
★★★☆☆

Flora Willson

▲ *A scene from Jay Scheib’s staging of Parsifal, which features violence, gigantic screens and garish colours* PHOTOGRAPH: DIE BAYREUTHER FESTSPIELE

There is the grail, the spear, the wound that will not heal. A solemn, life-sustaining ritual. A false paradise and an outsider who will redeem all. Even by Wagner’s standards, Parsifal is a heavily symbolic work - and nowhere more than at Bayreuth. It was the only work composed specifically for this theatre’s acoustic, and for decades, Wagner’s family prevented performances elsewhere. Despite such significant baggage, this latest revival of Jay Scheib’s 2023 production provokes only half-hearted booing amid energetic applause for the musicians.

The grail has become a large blue crystal accompanied by a light show. Kundry, the femme fatale, gets an avatar who seduces the usually unimpeachable Gurnemanz as the curtain rises, while filmed in close-up. The filming continues as Amfortas’s wound is unwrapped, poked and slowly sewn up, the nauseating results dominating Act 1 from a stage-wide screen.

The evil sorcerer Klingsor is a kind of dodgy uncle in pink velvet, dry-humping the stolen spear; his flower maidens occupy a luridly decorated concrete dungeon where the corpses of previous visitors lie on bloody mattresses and Parsifal is stripped down to what look like a tween’s pyjamas, hearts galore. Violence is ubiquitous. There is no “good” here, just shades of “complicated”. The result is bleak and emotionally monochrome.

Musically there is more variety. Miina-Liisa Värelä’s Kundry exudes goth energy, her low notes chilling, her melodies all liquid ferocity - bewitchingly joined up, whereas Andreas Schager’s Parsifal tends towards fragmentary notes and syllables when he isn’t singing at full pelt. Georg Zeppenfeld is an appealing Gurnemanz, his bass-baritone glowing and supple, and Vitalij Kowaljow a vigorously stentorian Titurel (Amfortas’s father). Jordan Shanahan (Klingsor) uses his bass like a weapon, hard-edged and sleek. As Amfortas, Michael Volle roars and rages but is most compelling in his painfully lyrical outbursts in Act 3.

The chorus is well blended, its diction crystalline. Under Pablo Heras-Casado, the orchestra is inconsistent. Intonation and ensemble in Wagner’s chordal motifs are unreliable, the smallest problems laid bare in this softly lucid acoustic. Yet, elsewhere the subtle symphonic fabric reaches seamlessly from exquisitely textured detail to swathes of almost infinite richness.

Until 25 August

‘The language is universal’ Ten years on, fans explain Pokémon Go’s appeal

Sammy Gecsoyler

Most Pokémon obsessives count rare, absurdly expensive playing cards or pristine, fully boxed game cartridges that have survived decades in the attic among their most prized possessions. But for Mairead Ralph, her Pokémon-related crown jewel is a bit different. “Technically, it’s my husband,” she says.

The pair first locked eyes amid decks of Pokémon playing cards and Pokéballs at a fan event 16 years ago and the rest is history.

Ralph was among hundreds of Pokémon fans who flocked to Shoreditch, east London, on Saturday afternoon for a pop-up celebrating the 10th anniversary of Pokémon Go, the hugely successful augmented reality smartphone game that has prompted millions of players to physically venture to all corners of the Earth to catch ’em all in person.

◀ *Stacie Smith, who was fond of the cartoon, and her son Rupert, who enjoys the cards, say they have found a ‘shared love’ of the franchise through Pokémon Go*

In that spirit, the surrounding area was full of Pokéheads wandering the streets, their heads in their phones, seeking to catch exclusive Pokémon that had been released.

Ralph, 42, is an OG Pokémon fan, getting into Pokémon Red when the game (and franchise) debuted 30 years ago. “I’ve been in love with it ever since,” she says.

Months after Pokémon Red was launched in Japan in February 1996, the now famous playing cards were released, some of which have since soared in value to thousands or even millions of pounds. In February, the world’s only Professional Sports Authenticator (PSA) 10-graded Pikachu Illustrator card was sold for a staggering £12m.

The franchise, which spans video games, playing cards, TV shows, films and merchandise, has become so big that the Pokémon company, which celebrated its 30th birthday in March, is now the world’s biggest media franchise, with total revenues of $147bn (£109bn), according to Guinness World Records.

This is far from the first Pokémon-related event Ralph has attended. She has travelled to Japan, the US and France to mingle with fans. Not necessarily sharing the same language hasn’t been a problem for her. “The language of Pokémon is universal.”

Ralph met her husband at one event. “I was at an event doing Pokémon stuff and he was working in a different area, and then we ran into each other at the local nerdy shop,” she says.

She thinks Pokémon has

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▼ *Rumeysa Usca says Pokémon Go's appeal is simple: 'I can entertain my dog, entertain myself and lose weight'*

PHOTOGRAPHS: TERI PENGILLEY/THE GUARDIAN

remained popular because it "brings people back to a happy place, no matter how bad the world is". It helps that most Pokémon are "happy and smiley" apart from a few "grumpy" outliers. "I'm looking at you, Mewtwo," she says.

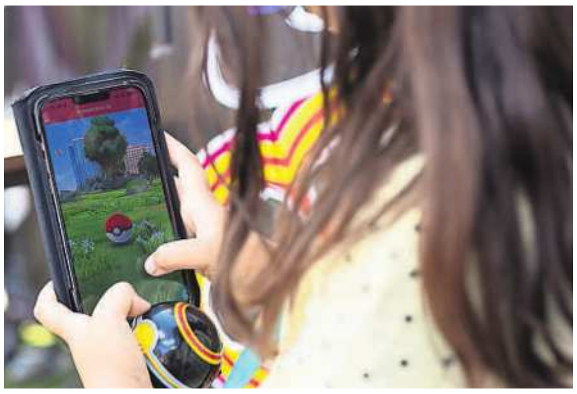
Also at the pop-up was Rumeysa Usca and her pomeranian, Boomi. The 34-year-old engineer travelled from Leamington.

For her, the appeal of Pokémon Go is simple. "I can entertain my dog, entertain myself and lose weight." Usca has been playing the smartphone game for four years and is a lifelong fan of the franchise.

She says Pokémon taps into nostalgia and a desire to return to simpler times. "As kids, we were so happy watching and playing it. It just brings back those good emotions."

> *'Pokémon brings people back to a happy place, no matter how bad the world is'*
>
> **Mairead Ralph**
> *Pokémon fan*

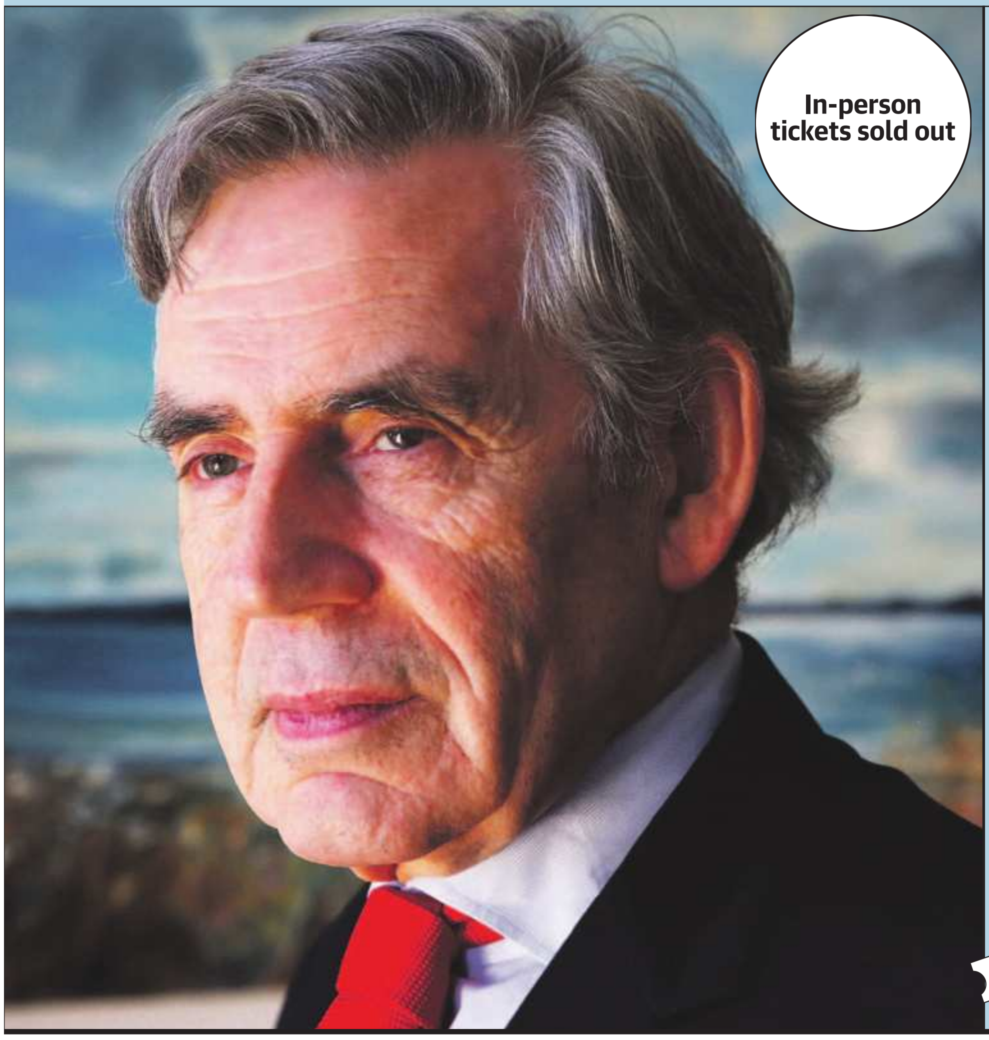
▼ *A 'Pokéhead' on the hunt at the pop-up celebration in Shoreditch*



Those who wanted a free coffee with a branded Pokémon Go cup needed to complete a challenge on the game along the surrounding streets. Among those taking part was Stacie Smith and her son Rupert. They travelled in from Southend in Essex. "She's been getting all the luck," says Rupert, referring to his mum catching better Pokémon than him on her phone. Smith remembers collecting Pokémon cards when she was growing up and she then became fond of the cartoon, which was a staple on children's TV in the late 1990s. Rupert enjoys the playing cards aspect more, but the pair have found a "shared love" of the franchise through Pokémon Go.

Rupert has autism, which means he "doesn't like leaving the house very much", says Smith, but the game has encouraged him to start venturing outside more, and the pair spend more time together. This, she says, is "really important for his mental health".At school, he has made friends through his enthusiasm for Pokémon.

Ralph's love of Pokémon will be enduring. "It doesn't matter if it's your first Pokémon or your thousandth Pokémon," she says. "That little click of the Pokéball will always bring you joy."



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The future starts with us: Gordon Brown in conversation

Why is the fracturing of the rules-based order and the erosion of civic life happening at the same time? Why are millions across the world turning to populist nationalist parties in search of solutions? And what can we all do about it?

Gordon Brown will join the Guardian's **Hugh Muir** to uncover the intricate connections between global instability and civic decline. He'll also share a practical and hopeful roadmap to bring us back together and renew the global order, as explored in his new book, The Future Starts With Us.

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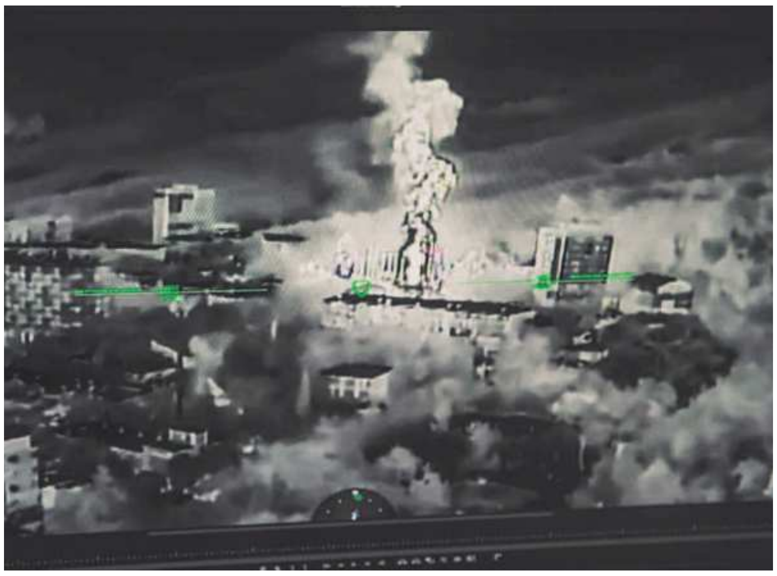


▲ *A computer screen used by members of Ukraine's elite drone force shows a direct hit on an electricity substation in the Crimean resort of Alushta*

'Putin is afraid' Ukraine's elite drone strike force is taking the fight to Russia

Luke Harding
Ukraine

Sparrows were chirping as the sun set over a field of tall yellow sunflowers, when a moped-like growl suddenly disturbed the evening calm. The noise rose, dipped, and rose again. Lt Col Ray, a Ukrainian commander with the 414th aviation brigade, took cover in a leafy ditch.

Seconds later a Ukrainian drone roared into a mauve sky. It jerked upwards at a 45-degree angle, orange flames fizzing, and then motored serenely onwards. The flying object resembled a sleek, grey biplane with a wooden propeller and tail. It left behind clouds of billowing black smoke and a whiff of gunpowder.

Four and a half years after Vladimir Putin sent tanks to seize Kyiv, the war in Ukraine has moved from the earth to the sky, turning into a battle of drones. The contest – unprecedented in the history of warfare – features technology, innovation and rapid development.

"We are making history here," Ray said. "This is where democracy beats totalitarianism. It's like George Orwell, but this time Big Brother loses."

The drone vanished over the horizon, engine thrumming. Its destination was Crimea, a scenic Ukrainian peninsula of beaches and white chalk mountains, stolen by Russia in 2014 and militarised thereafter.

Next, two more long-range drones hurtled forward. They soared into the twilight, above a darkening steppe landscape. Each carried 50-100kg (110-220lb) of explosives. Mission over, the Ukrainian soldiers packed briskly, winding up white cables with practised ease. Within 10 minutes the men had disappeared down a tree-lined and potholed track.

Far away from the frontline, other crews were crisscrossing Ukraine, releasing drones according to a precise evening schedule. Operators sitting in front of computer screens nudged them towards enemy targets. This model can fly more than 1,550 miles (2,500km), far enough to pummel targets in European Russia and much of Siberia as well.

▲ *A long-range drone is launched toward Russian-occupied Crimea, where Kyiv has carried out strikes as part of its 'switch off' campaign*

1,550

Distance in miles some of Ukraine's drones can fly, enabling them to hit targets across European Russia

The journey made by Ray's trio of drones was shorter. After four hours, at about 1am, the first reached the resort of Alushta on the southern coast of occupied Crimea. It weaved between grey apartment blocks and crashed into an electricity substation. Flames erupted, pricking the city's inky blackness.

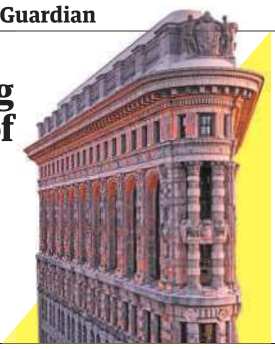
These remote strikes on 21 July were part of what Ukraine has nicknamed the Crimean "switch off": a campaign to disconnect the region from its power and logistics networks. That same night drones hit 13 electricity nodes. Several were located in the Russian-controlled parts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces, which the Kremlin says it has annexed.

Since 2022 Russia has carried out nightly attacks on Ukrainian cities and towns. It sends Iranian-designed shaheds as well as ballistic and hypersonic missiles. After Donald Trump returned to the White House last year, these swarms grew. They rain down chaotically, killing families in their apartments and other civilians in a calculated campaign of terror.

Once a recipient of western assistance, Ukraine has responded by developing its own military manufacturing base. It has grown rapidly, making the country the world's leading producer of unmanned systems. The drones hurled last month at Crimea were built in Kyiv by a defence technology startup. The firm's representatives take part in military operations.

Ray's battalion – named after

New York City
Flatiron building enters new era of luxury *Page 25*



Kenya
Rastafarians fight to decriminalise cannabis *Page 26*

▲ *Lt Col Ray, a commander with Ukraine's 414th aviation brigade, said he 'felt revenge and a sense of justice' every time one of his drones ascended into the night sky bound for enemy territory. 'We are making history here,' he said*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALESSIO MAMO/ THE GUARDIAN

Kairos, the ancient Greek god of opportunity, luck and the fleeting moment – has carried out hundreds of deep strikes against Russia. Targets have included oil refineries, warehouses and munitions depots. It has also struck ports and harbours, as well as roads and railways used for army logistics.

> *'At this rate, with their intention to seize half of Ukraine, are they planning to fight for 100 years?'*
>
> **Robert Brovdi**
> *Head of unmanned systems*

This year Ukrainian drones have struck Moscow and Putin's home city of St Petersburg, embarrassing Russia's president and bringing the war home to ordinary citizens who have previously ignored it. "I think Putin is afraid," Ray said. "One of the justifications he gave for his war was to stop Ukraine from [potentially] bombing Moscow. It's happening now as a direct consequence of his actions."

Ray said he felt "revenge and justice" every time one of his drones ascended into the sky, bound for enemy territory.

"We didn't start this war. We have no choice," he said. "We are fighting for our independence, for our people, for the memory of those who have died and for our future. This is a contest between slaves and free people."

Secrecy surrounds Ukraine's drone operation. An analytics department finds targets. Western partners provide some intelligence but most is open source. Drone crews are given coordinates at the last minute. So far none of those who take part in launches have been injured or killed, despite attempts by Moscow to identify and blow up lift-off points.

One person involved said: "You are making change on a global scale. Trump wakes up and sees the results. At the same time it's very solitary. You can't tell anybody about what you do or boast: 'Today we bombed Moscow.' Only your commander understands."

They added: "It's an important job. You feel the biggest satisfaction and a member of an elite."

Kairos is part of Magyar's Birds, a brigade named after the call sign of its founder, Robert Brovdi, the head of Ukraine's unmanned systems forces. Last month Brovdi launched a campaign to destroy oil tankers and other vessels in the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. So far, more than 200 have been hit. The Russians were taken unawares, their boats unable to escape.

Since last week the brigade has been burning warehouses belonging to Wildberries, Russia's equivalent of Amazon, obliterating at least nine of them. Ukraine says the company sells military products. The strikes have crippled small businesses and caused billions of roubles in damage. Brovdi said: "The socio-psychological impact on society is greater than that of an oil refinery."

Ukrainian long-range drones had "significantly thinned out" Russia's air defences, he added. "We have already destroyed the majority of them. With every air defence unit destroyed, the breach expands." Three days earlier, air defence units had been flattened in the Russian port of Yeysk on the Sea of Azov, he added, bringing the number of systems knocked out to 305.

Russia's enormous size – once a strategic strength – has turned into a weakness. A panicked Kremlin had moved "a certain number" of air defences from the frontline to protect Moscow, Brovdi said. He wants to stop Russia using Crimea as a "springboard" to fire on Ukraine and to push out the nearly 1 million Russian residents, or "colonisers", who settled on the peninsula after Putin's 2014 takeover.

Crimea now has so little fuel that Russian military groups are sometimes unable to fill up and launch drones. There are also frequent power cuts.

One brigade member, call sign Schweik, predicted food shortages would happen soon. "The operation is endless," he said. "There will be a cascade effect. We will continue this pressure. They will be thinking about survival instead of assault operations."

Schweik added: "The situation is humiliating for Russia. Crimea is symbolic. It was Putin's first trophy and the place where the world order was broken.

"He created a kind of euphoria in Russia society, which in turn gave him permission to go and take more [Ukrainian] territory. Now everyone in the world understands that Russia is really weak."

Not all Ukrainian drones reach their targets. According to Ray, about a third are brought down over occupied territory. He admitted losses in the skies above Russia were considerably higher. Nevertheless, Ukraine's strategy – to pile pressure on the Russian economy – appears to be working. Brovdi said: "Troops and resources must be exhausted so that it becomes impossible for them to continue the war."

He acknowledged that Russian troops were still advancing in the eastern Donbas region, with battles in the city of Kostiantynivka. "Their gains to date do not justify the price they're paying for them," he said. "At this rate, with their intention to seize half of Ukraine, are they planning to fight for 100 years?"

Back in the countryside, Ray's colleague "Panama" described the latest launch as a success. "It was 10 out of 10. With us it's always like this," he said, adding that he had been working with the current biplane-like model for a year and a half. "To begin with we used foreign drones. Sometimes things went wrong. Now we don't have problems."

The only challenge came from the mosquitoes that fill the air during summer evenings. "Over time we've become friends with them," Panama said. "They don't annoy me any more. They are also inhabitants of free Ukraine. They can do whatever they want. But if they irritate us we will launch them at the enemy. They can eat Russians."

Betrayal: Trump, Putin and the New Age of Conquest by Luke Harding is published on 27 August by Guardian Faber. To support the Guardian, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply

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▲ *Police and emergency services at the site of the explosion in Moscow*

Bomb blast near Moscow restaurant kills three people

Reuters
Moscow

A homemade bomb carried by a woman killed three people and injured at least 21 in an explosion near a restaurant in central Moscow on Saturday evening, prompting speculation on social media that the attack may have been linked to the war in Ukraine.

The explosion occurred just before 8pm local time (6pm UK time) close to an Italian restaurant in one of Moscow's seven Stalin-era skyscrapers at Kudrinskaya Square, police said.

Russia's anti-terrorism committee said an unidentified woman carrying an improvised explosive device had tried to get into the restaurant but was stopped by a security guard, the state RIA news agency reported. It said the woman, the security guard and a customer at the Balzi Rossi restaurant were killed in the blast.

REN TV cited a source yesterday as saying two people who had been taken to hospital had later died, bringing the death toll to five, but there was no official confirmation. The channel said six people were in a serious condition.

Sergei Sobyanin, Moscow's mayor, said those responsible would be punished. "A brutal terrorist attack was carried out in Moscow yesterday," he said. The authorities did not name those killed or injured or any suspects. Unverified social media reports suggested a senior Russian military commander had been the intended target but had been unharmed.

Russia promised better protection for high-ranking military officials this year after a series of assassinations and attempted killings, which it blamed on Kyiv. Russian war bloggers, without citing any evidence, were quick to blame Ukraine for the latest attack. Kyiv did not immediately comment.

The Kommersant daily suggested the woman carrying the bomb may not have known about it, and that it had been set off remotely by someone else. The restaurant's website said the venue had been closed on Saturday for a private event.

Eyewitness

▶ *England's Emily Campbell celebrates setting a new Commonwealth Games record and winning gold in the women's +86kg weightlifting competition*

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11
BELL EMILY

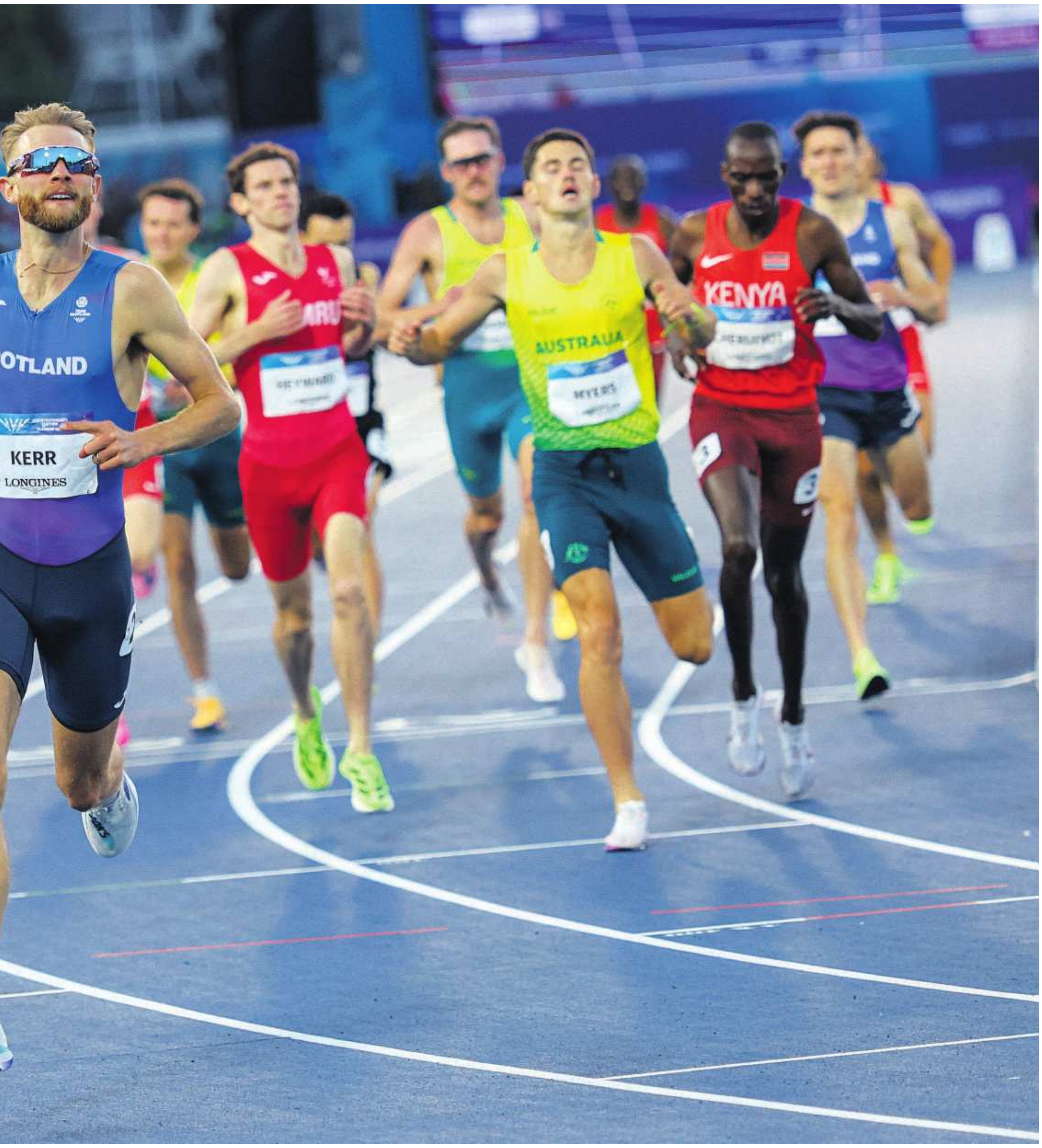
▲ *Peter Cusack of England and Tomas Klein of Australia battle it out during the final of the men's 3x3 wheelchair basketball. Australia beat England 19-13*

◀ *Anderson Peters of Grenada, who came fourth in the javelin. Sri Lanka's Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage took the gold medal*

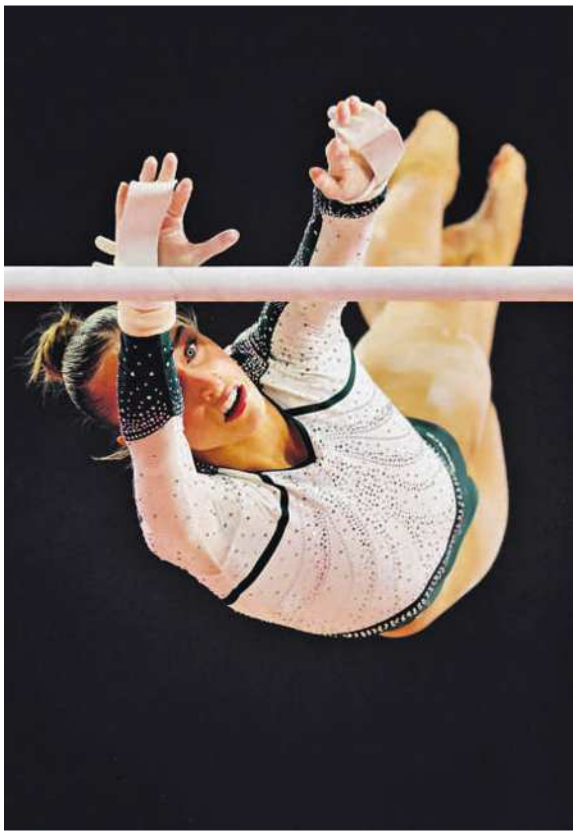
Commonwealth Games 2026

Photographs by Tom Jenkins

The games drew to a close in Glasgow yesterday after 11 action-packed days. About 3,000 athletes and para-athletes from 74 nations battled it out to win medals in 10 sports, from bowls to swimming. The next event, held in India in 2030, will mark the competition's centenary.

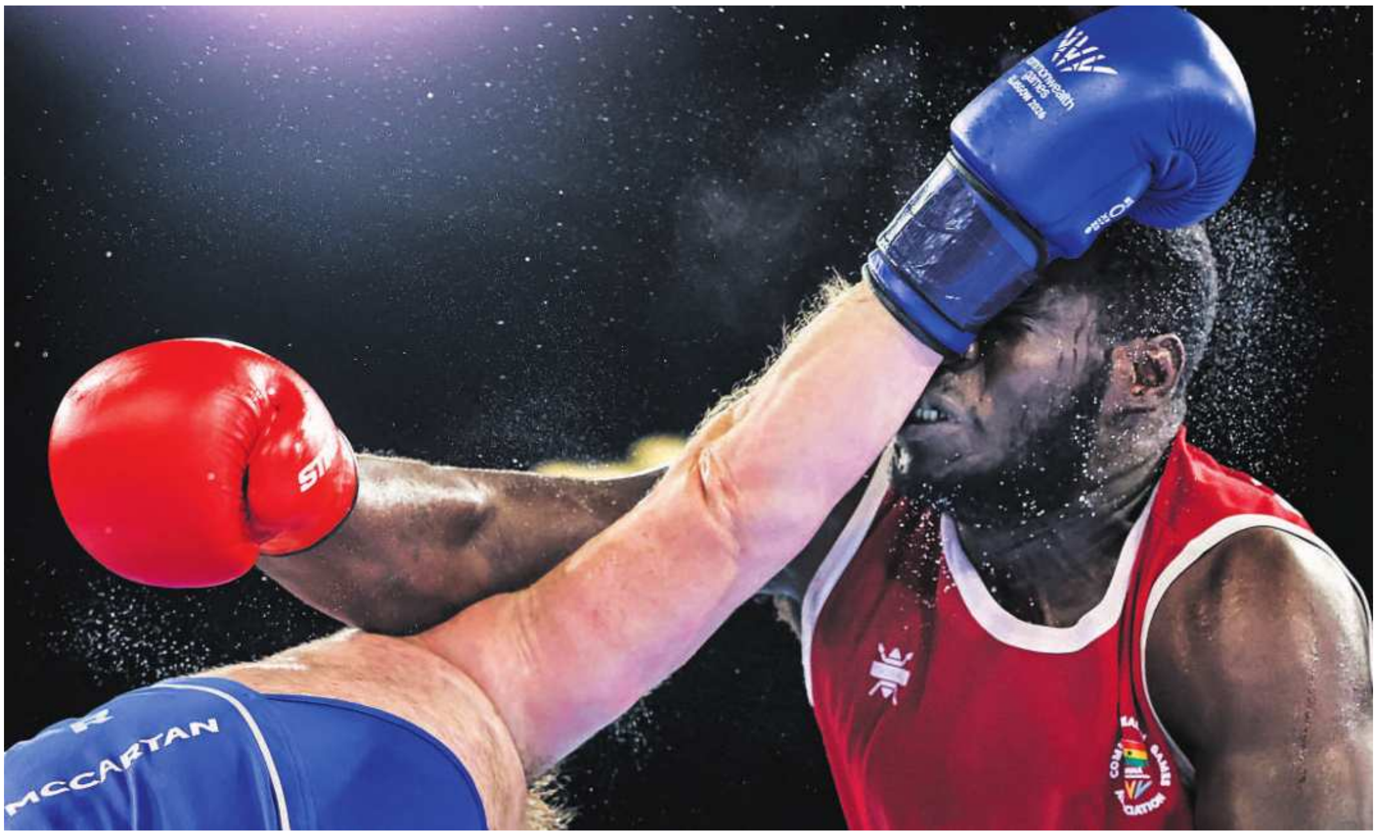


◀ The Scottish runner Josh Kerr celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win gold in the men's mile final, having shattered the world record for the distance in London only a fortnight earlier



▲ The Welsh gymnast Emily Roper competes on the uneven bars in the women's all-around final, before going on to finish seventh overall in artistic gymnastics

▲ England's Adam Tobin wraps his wrists before competing in the men's all-around final in artistic gymnastics



◀ Daniel Plange of Ghana (right) is punched by Willie John McCartan of Northern Ireland who went on to win their boxing +90kg quarter-final

Trump calls off Iran strikes in expectation of a ‘rapid’ deal

Rory Carroll

Donald Trump has said he cancelled military strikes against Iran on the basis of “rapidly” reaching a deal on its nuclear programme and the full reopening of the strait of Hormuz.

The US president paused the strikes in expectation of a breakthrough and in response to requests from Iran and other countries in the region, he claimed on his Truth Social platform on Saturday. “Based on this request, I have agreed, for the future benefit of the WORLD and, likewise, the survival of a successful and prosperous Iran, to cancel the attack, subject to being able to rapidly make a DEAL,” he wrote.

The deal would include the immediate and complete reopening of the strait and “an end to Iran’s nuclear threat”. It marked the latest climbdown from extravagant threats to pound Iran.

Late last night, Trump said new talks with Iran would begin today, telling reporters on Air Force One: “Obviously, they don’t want to be attacked. They knew the extent of the attack because they saw it forming. Now what we’re doing is we’re talking to them in the form of a negotiation.”

There was no confirmation from the Iranians.

Earlier in the day, Iran’s Mehr news agency said Trump’s claim that Tehran had requested a pause “was nothing but a new lie” and that the Iranian armed forces were “on high alert and ready for any eventuality”.

Another Iranian news agency, Fars, citing a source close to Iranian negotiators, said as long as the US “maintains its hostile actions” the strait would remain closed.

Iran’s acting defence minister, Majid Ebn-e-Reza, said Trump backed down “within the context of psychological operations and a war of calculations”. Iran’s forces would remain on alert, he said on X, adding: “We will neither be taken by surprise nor will we be passive.”

Hassan Ghashghavi, a spokesperson for the Iranian parliament’s national security commission, said mediators were trying to revive an agreement brokered by Pakistan in June, Agence France-Presse reported.

The decision to halt fresh strikes came after the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, called Trump on Saturday, it was reported.

Trump’s reversal also followed Iranian threats to retaliate decisively against its neighbours in the event of US strikes, while Kuwait reported being hit by Iranian drones on Saturday and two ships were attacked off Oman in the strait of Hormuz.

One source told the US news site Axios that the Saudi crown prince had “urged Trump to de-escalate and refrain from launching the strikes”.

Associated Press (AP) also reported the conversation, citing its own source.

It said the Saudis were concerned that if the US targeted Iran’s key infrastructure, Tehran could respond with similar attacks on the kingdom and other Gulf countries.

A White House official, who was not authorised to comment publicly and requested anonymity, confirmed to AP that Trump and Prince Mohammed had spoken.

Saudi Arabia joined the US last week in striking sites used by Iranian-backed militias in Iraq, but has been urging the US and Iran to return to the negotiating table.

CBS News reported that the US and Israel were planning joint strikes, with oil refineries and power plants among possible targets.

Tehran warned last weekend against any “adventurous action” by the US and said it would retaliate decisively. Comments by Iran’s foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, in separate phone calls on Saturday with senior Turkish, Pakistani and Saudi officials came just hours after Kuwait’s army said it destroyed drones launched by Iran against several vital facilities. A government facility in northern Kuwait and civilian property on Bubiyan Island were hit, causing material damage but no casualties, the Kuwaiti army said.

Nournews, an outlet affiliated with Iran’s top security body, said on Saturday that US attacks on Iranian energy infrastructure would prompt strikes on oilfields in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as gasfields in Qatar and Israel.

The developments appeared to have given Trump pause for thought, after he had posted on Saturday that “the USA is locked and loaded” to strike Iran with “military terror, strength, and power not seen since World War II”.

Additional reporting
Reuters, Agence France-Presse and Associated Press

▼ *Trump and his son Eric find time amid the US-Iran conflict to attend a golf tournament earlier this year*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX BRANDON/AP

Bank cites fears over money laundering in Trump lawsuit

Reuters

Capital One Financial hit back on Friday against a lawsuit over its decision to close the Trump Organization’s bank accounts years ago, stating that it did so after a review by anti-money-laundering experts.

The disclosure marks the first time a bank has formally tied money-laundering concerns to Donald Trump’s family business. Capital One is seeking to dismiss the case by casting doubt on claims of illegally debanking – or denying services on religious or political grounds – the Trump Organization.

The Trump Organization and Capital One did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Capital One has never accused the Trump Organization of money laundering. But Friday’s filing argues that “documents and Plaintiffs’ own allegations make clear that Capital One closed Plaintiffs’ accounts for anti-money laundering (‘AML’) reasons”.

It adds: “The closures were the result of months of analysis and a careful review by Capital One’s AML team in accordance with bank policies and regulatory guidance.”

Capital One gave notice of its plans to close more than 300 Trump-affiliated bank accounts in March 2021.

The Trump Organization and the president’s son Eric Trump filed a lawsuit in March 2025 in a Florida federal court, alleging the accounts were closed because of Capital One’s “woke” beliefs and its desire to benefit from the political mood after the 6 January 2021 riot at the US Capitol.

Capital One said in Friday’s filing that the Trump Organization’s allegations of political pretext were “misguided” .

“The transaction patterns identified by Capital One are among the types of activity flagged by federal banking guidance,” the filing said.

Fox News President’s backers start to question logic of war

Jeremy Barr

Throughout his two presidencies, Donald Trump has leaned on reliable support from the conservative opinion wing of Fox News. But, like a broad swathe of the US public, several traditionally supportive commentators have recently expressed concerns about the Iran war.

One of the network’s top personalities, Laura Ingraham, has questioned whether the US has achieved the tactical wins it has claimed in Iran. Trump has also faced scepticism from one of the network’s most prominent commentators on the armed forces, Johnny Jones. Jones is close to Pete Hegseth, his former Fox colleague who is now the defence secretary.

That’s not to mention the network’s military commentators, such as retired Lt Gen Keith Kellogg, who said on Fox on Wednesday that Trump needed to change his strategy. “I don’t think we’re close, in that regard of finishing the job, if we are just depending on bombing,” said Kellogg, who had a short-lived stint in Trump’s second administration as his envoy to Ukraine. “Bombing is not going to get the job done.”

Last week, Ingraham acknowledged a New York Times report that Trump faced threats that forced him to use an alternative plane to Air Force One and suggested claims that the US had demolished Iran’s military were inaccurate. “If Iran can credibly threaten Air Force One overseas, we didn’t decimate their military capabilities, obviously,” she said. “They’re still capable of a lot of harm.”

She made a similar point in June, telling viewers: “We keep hearing their military is destroyed. But if they’re destroyed, how are they continuing to hit us?”

In March, Ingraham called for the US to investigate and what she called a “horrible unintended tragedy”, the killing of 175 civilians – mostly children – in an errant attack on a school in Iran.

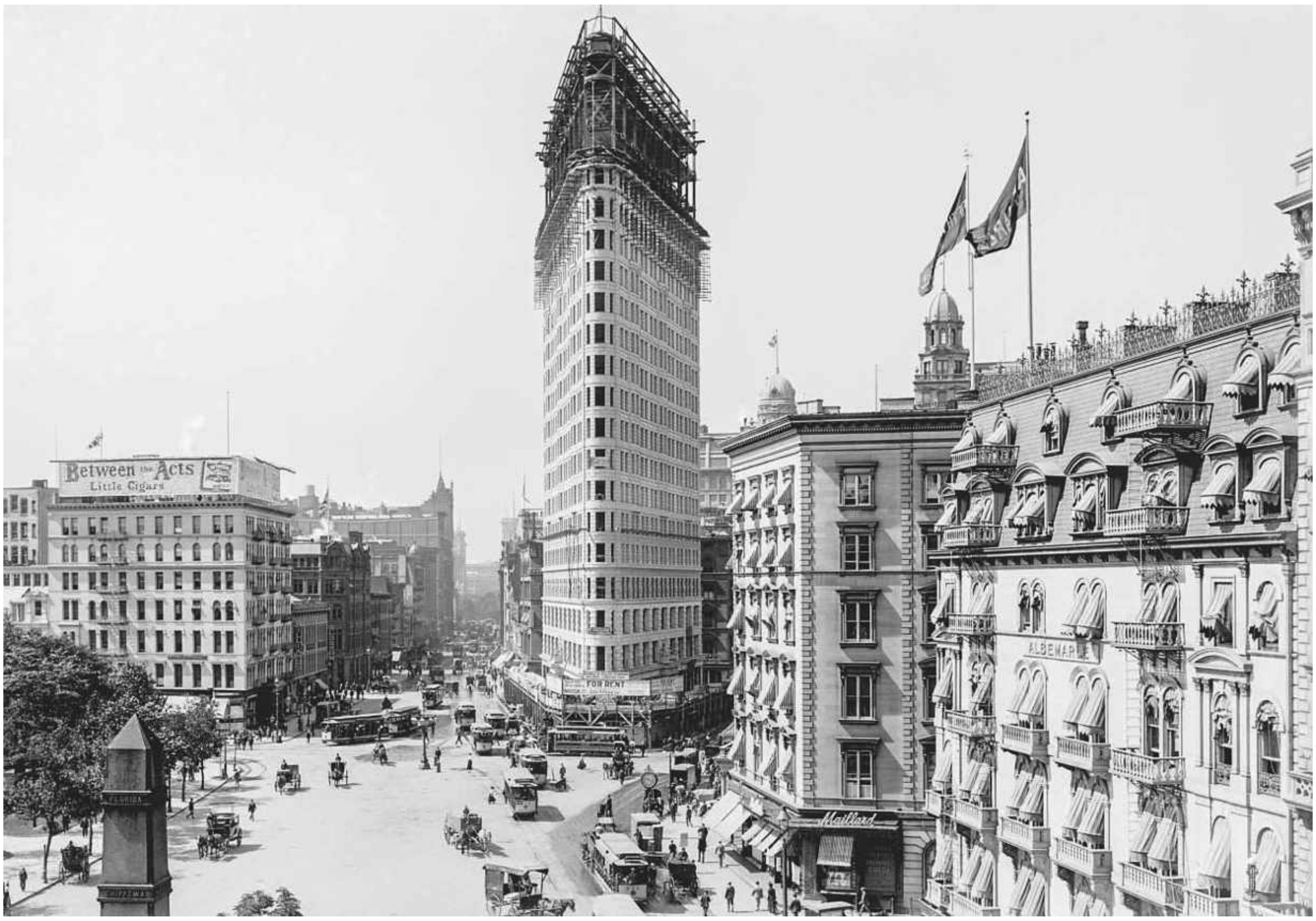
She also questioned whether Trump understood the “complexity” of the war. “Was the president fully briefed about the risks of all of this from the beginning?” she asked. “And was he then able to take it all in and understand the complexity of this?”

◀ *Laura Ingraham has questioned whether the US has really achieved the tactical wins it claims in Iran*

From the beginning, Jones show sought to emphasise the stakes of the conflict. “It’s important and it’s okay for any Americans who are saying: ‘Wait just a minute. Tell me more. Tell me why we are at war. Explain to me why this was imminent,’” he said. “I don’t think that questions your patronage to the American government or even if you’re Maga or what have you. It doesn’t question President Trump’s wisdom in this.”

Brit Hume, a Fox News analyst, said recently: “He promised to keep us out of endless wars or unsatisfactory wars, and now he’s in one, and it’s not at all clear how it’s going to end. So, he’s vulnerable on this point, and in political terms, he does need to get this over with.”

Narrow escape Flatiron to provide New York boltholes for the very rich



▲ *The Flatiron building under construction in 1902 at East 23 Street where Broadway crosses Fifth Avenue. Left and below, promotional images of the refurbishment*
MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

36
The number of apartments in the refurbished Flatiron building. They come with price tags of up to $58.5m

Adam Gabbatt
New York

New York City's Flatiron building has had many lives: as a structure seen as a deathtrap, as a nuisance that created a deadly, petticoat-lifting, wind current and, mainly, as a commercial space.

Now the triangular building, a favourite of tourists and locals alike, is entering a new era: as a residential building, where apartments cost up to $58.5m (£43m).

Completed in 1902, the Flatiron was once derided as a folly but the beaux-arts building is now one of New York's most admired landmarks. Named Flatiron owing to its resemblance, from above, to a clothes iron, the building's ornamental brick and terracotta exterior has been hidden behind scaffolding for the best part of seven years.

The reimagined Flatiron will open to very wealthy residents later this year. There are 36 apartments in the building, including some that span entire floors: there's a double-height lobby too, a pool and a games room. But for all the shared amenities the real allure will be the apartments. They have been styled by a venerated New York design firm, which stripped back the interior, exposing some of the Flatiron's interior "steel skeleton", the building's interior steel frame that was cutting-edge technology at the time.

Images seen by the Guardian show one of the four-bedroom, four-bathroom apartments in the Flatiron, which features a curved sofa in what the press materials describe as the building's "prow" – the sharpest angle of the structure. Photos show that there has been a generous application of marble in the bathroom, and equally liberal use of brushed steel in the kitchen.

According to the estate agent's website, 14 of the apartments in the Flatiron are already in contract. The cheapest, on the third floor, appears to have been bought for $10.95m: the buyer will get a three-bedroom, three-bathroom apartment with a not-large open-plan kitchen and "great room". There are also two dressing rooms.

The flagship apartment, however, occupies the entire top floor. In contract for $58.5m, the floorplan of the five-bedroom, five-bathroom apartment depicts a sauna, two dressing rooms, a dining room and a breakfast room, and a 72ft "great room".

"There's always hesitation taking on a landmark building like this. But there's also an advantage. It has an incredibly special character that makes it worth the pain," Daniel Brodsky, the managing partner of the Brodsky Organization, which owns the building, told the Financial Times.

Brodsky said that Jeff Bezos, the Amazon founder, had spent more than $100m buying several properties three blocks north of the Flatiron. "There's a group of wealthy people who want to be in a convenient place; good transportation, the best restaurants in the city, the park … it's a very easy place to live," Brodsky said.

The Flatiron was designed by Daniel Burnham, arguably the hottest architect of the age, and was initially called the Fuller Building. That failed to take off and Flatiron stuck, although pedants might point out that the floorplan of the building is actually a scalene triangle, whereas a flatiron would typically be an isosceles.

While the Flatiron is fondly regarded now, it wasn't universally popular on its completion, amid fears that the building was so narrow it could fall over. It also didn't help people warm to the building when it emerged that the design had inadvertently created a "Flatiron breeze" – a powerful, localised wind caused by its shape. According to the author Alice Sparberg Alexiou, the breeze "blew total strangers into each other's arms, causing much embarrassment", and in a tragic incident blew a 14-year-old messenger boy called John McTaggart into middle of Fifth Avenue where he was run over by a car and later died.

"It was long common knowledge that if you walked by the Flatiron on a windy day at the very least your skirts were going to end up over your head and your legs exposed. It was now all the rage for groups of men of a certain character to loiter at the foot of the Flatiron, expressly to catch a glimpse of feminine flesh," Alexiou wrote in The Flatiron: The New York Landmark and the Incomparable City That Arose with It.

Despite the chaos it was causing at street level the Flatiron defied predictions that it would topple over. "During a 60-mile-an-hour windstorm that battered the city one morning soon after the first tenants moved in, you couldn't feel the slightest vibration in the building," Alexiou wrote.

It was built to last, in other words, and this latest iteration will continue its legacy – even if it is far beyond the pockets of most New Yorkers.

‘Free up the ganja’

Kenya’s Rastafarians fight for their rights

Carlos Mureithi
Nairobi

About a dozen people chanted along to the pulsing vibrations of drums and a tambourine in a dimly lit room in Nairobi’s sprawling Kibera neighbourhood. For more than an hour they belted out songs suffused with references to Ethiopia, Jah, Zion, Rastafari and Haile Selassie I.

The musicians were members of the House of Nyabinghi, one of the main denominations or “mansions” of Rastafari, a religion and social movement that came under the spotlight in Kenya after a court ruling on 15 July dismissed a petition to decriminalise the use of marijuana for spiritual purposes.

Three days later, the House of Nyabinghi - named after a legendary east African woman whose name means “mother of abundance” - met for their weekly “groundation”, or gathering.

A red, yellow and green flag and images of Rastafari’s influences such as Haile Selassie I, Bob Marley and the Jamaican political activist Marcus Garvey embellished the walls. Sizzles and crackles were heard as some of those gathered lit marijuana, its scent filling the air.

Among them was Ras Orudi, who came to Rastafari after being inspired by Jamaican reggae artists such as Peter Tosh. “Rastafarians are not rejecting the system,” said the 38-year-old herbalist. “They are trying to integrate into the system while defending their rights.”

Also in the room was Ras Ndeto, whose inspiration was meeting a Rastafarian from Guyana who taught him “livity”, the practice of righteous and natural living centred on a plant-based “ital” diet and the growing of dreadlocks.

The 56-year-old said the court’s decision marginalised followers of the religion, who would appeal to a higher court. “We still feel we are a minority group in this country because even our culture is looked down upon,” said Ndeto, who holds the title of prophet and is the spokesperson for the Rastafari Society of Kenya. “We are living like terrorists in our own country.”

Ras Ndeto, Rastafarian Association of Kenya

Ras Orudi, a herbalist for the House of Nyabinghi

▼ *Rastafarians pray at the Haile Selassie Foundation in Nairobi’s Kibera neighbourhood*

PHOTOGRAPH: EDWIN NDEKE/THE GUARDIAN

An Afrocentric religion, Rastafari is centred on the beliefs that the former Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie I is the messiah, and that Black people are oppressed by Babylon - a metaphor for western capitalism and imperialism.

The movement emerged in the 30s within marginalised Afro-Jamaican communities after Protestant leaders declared Selassie’s crowning the fulfilment of a biblical prophecy. The religion is named after his pre-coronation name, Ras Tafari Makonnen.

Ras Dimo, a priest who often leads prayers in Kibera, became enlightened partly through reading books examining the connection between Black people and the Bible. “I was inspired to know that Black people are not cursed as imperialists tried to make us think,” the 43-year-old said. “We are living in a time when many are blinded.”

Like many other Rastafarians in Kenya, Dimo was born into a Christian family and later became Rastafari. They adopt the title Ras, which means “head” or “chief” in Amharic, the most widely spoken language in Ethiopia.

> *‘I was inspired to know that Black people are not cursed as imperialists tried to make us think’*
>
> **Ras Dimo**
> *Rastafari priest*

The population of Rastafarians in Kenya is unknown. In 2019, a court recognised Rastafari as a legally protected religion in a landmark ruling after a pupil alleged discrimination when her school expelled her due to her dreadlocks.

Marijuana, a product of the *Cannabis sativa* plant, is a sacrament in the faith, and Rastafarians believe consuming it puts them in a meditative state that helps them connect with the divine. Followers in different parts of the world are pushing for its decriminalisation. In 2023, Antigua and Barbuda approved allowing Rastafarians to grow cannabis and smoke marijuana.

In 2021, the Rastafari Society of Kenya filed a court petition seeking the exemption of Rastafarians from arrest and prosecution for cultivating, possessing and using the plant for religious purposes, or a requirement that the government create a legal framework for the practice.

The court ruled the society had failed to prove that the law violated Rastafarians’ constitutional rights, among other reasons.

Ras Masinde, another follower in Kibera, became curious about Rastafari as a child after encountering a man with dreadlocks. He became rebellious, refusing to cut his hair, and after finishing school in the 90s started growing dreadlocks and reading about the Rastafari religion, before finding a community.

“We Rastafarians urge Black people to go back to their roots and culture,” said the 50-year-old. “We *fyah bun* [condemn] colonialism and imperialism, and say every man, woman and child … is equal before the eyes of the almighty.”

He issued a rallying call: “Free up the herb. Free up the ganja seed.”

Anti-LGBTQ+ laws on the rise in west Africa, campaigners warn

Rachel Savage
Johannesburg

A growing number of west African countries are implementing or strengthening anti-LGBTQ+ laws amid local political pressures and a global pushback against LGBTQ+ rights.

In March, Senegal doubled the maximum prison sentence for gay sex to 10 years and criminalised the “promotion” of homosexuality. Niger criminalised “sexual relations with a person of the same sex” in February, the first time same-sex intimacy had been outlawed in the country. Mali and Burkina Faso also criminalised same-sex relations for the first time in the last two years. All three are ruled by military juntas.

In June, Ghana, which already outlaws gay sex, passed a law criminalising LGBTQ+ “activities”. The bill, which hasn’t been signed into law by the president, is the latest version of a bill first introduced in 2021.

“What I see in all of them is a political opportunism,” said Anthony Oluoch of Pan Africa ILGA, a continental LGBTQ+ rights campaign group.

In some countries, he said, the new or harsher laws had been backed by religious groups and campaigns for “family values”, while in Burkina Faso, whose population is predominantly Muslim, the law was framed as boosting its sovereignty in opposition to the west. “Underneath that all, there’s a lot of transnational reinforcement,” Oluoch added.

LGBTQ+ people “are the easiest scapegoats to maintain their power”, said an activist in Burkina Faso, who could not be named for her security.

The impact on the community, even before the law was implemented, has been devastating, activists said. Thirteen transgender women were detained without trial from June to November last year, an HIV worker said, with the women reporting they had been beaten by a military unit that imprisoned them. Since the law passed, there have been at least two sets of convictions.

Police are entrapping LGBTQ+ people on social media and demanding they denounce other community members, said the HIV worker, who fled the country in May after he was named by someone who had been arrested.

The African Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Family Values and Sovereignty, a forum that many argue has influenced anti-LGBTQ+ laws on the continent, will be held in Burkina Faso and then Eswatini next year, it was announced this year. The first three conferences were held in Uganda, east Africa, beginning in 2023. Uganda imposed the death penalty for some same-sex sexual acts that year.

◀ *Ibrahim Traoré, the interim president of Burkina Faso, which has criminalised same-sex relations*

At this year’s conference, hosted by Ghana’s parliament in June, the draft African Charter on Family Sovereignty and Values treaty was drawn up. It condemns abortion and child sexual exploitation, states that gender is either male or female, and asserts that parental rights supersede children’s.

Across west Africa, LGBTQ+ people are suffering the consequences of the new and harsher laws.

In Senegal, the law is also hindering HIV prevention for men who have sex with men and transgender women, who have higher rates of HIV prevalence, as well as lawyers representing LGBTQ+ people, said Marame Kane, an activist based in Paris.

▼ *Firefighters battle a wildfire near the village of Agia Paraskevi on the Aegean island of Lesbos*

PHOTOGRAPH: STELIOS MISINAS/REUTERS

Helicopters collide fighting blaze west of Athens as wildfire crisis reaches Greece

Helena Smith
Athens

Two firefighting helicopters collided west of Athens yesterday, killing the two crew members of one of the aircraft, as efforts to control a massive wildfire barrelling towards the outskirts of the Greek capital intensified.

Footage showed one of the helicopters losing control in the face of gale-force winds that have pushed flames towards settlements on Athens' western fringes.

"The pilots … were taken unconscious to hospital, where their death was confirmed," said the fire department's director of communications, Vassilis Vathrakogiannis.

The prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, said the two dead were a Dane and a Greek. The two crew of the second helicopter were rescued.

Blazes ripped through Greece's tinder-dry landscape, up mountain slopes and down to the sea.

Warning of "extremely difficult" days ahead, Mitsotakis underlined the threat posed by gusts that in recent days have exceeded 75mph.

"When the winds blow with such force, even the dozens of aircraft we have at our disposal cannot operate safely," he wrote on social media.

Over Saturday night more than 100 homes were destroyed in fires that broke out around the popular coastal village of Porto Germeno, 30 miles north-west of Athens. By yesterday more than 500 firefighters and forest commandos had been dispatched to keep the flames at bay.

The eastern Mediterranean, no stranger to wildfires, has had a relatively calm summer to date, leaving Greeks to watch in horror as the summer scourge has hit farther west.

But as the advance of massive wildfires in Spain was finally curbed and officials in France said a megafire four times the size of Paris had begun to be contained, blazes have erupted across Greece, prompting mass evacuations and devastation of swathes of land from Crete to the southern Peloponnese, Kephalonia in the Ionian Sea and islands across the Aegean.

Last week three firefighters died of wounds.

Greece's civil protection minister, Evangelos Tournas, said the fire department had been "pushed to its limits". Winds had created "extremely difficult conditions resulting in many cases where aircraft cannot draw water or … carry out drops due to extreme turbulence".

▲ *An olive tree burns in the Megara valley 25 miles west of Athens*

France's largest wildfire remained contained after 224,000 people had to flee in what may have been the largest peacetime evacuation in French history. Yet pockets still burned across 162 sq miles of devastated forest.

Thousands remained unable to return home, and nearly 3,000 firefighters were deployed against the Gironde megafire and a second blaze in Provence that had stopped advancing but remained uncontained.

"The fire is now fixed, which does not mean the fire is extinguished," the Gironde prefecture said yesterday. The region remained under France's highest red forest-fire alert.

Additional firefighters from Ukraine, Lithuania and French Polynesia were expected yesterday and today to reinforce the operation.

Hundreds of miles away, nearly 1,500 firefighters were battling a fire in the south-eastern Var department that tore through roughly 7 sq miles in little more than a day.

Authorities said the fire in the Gros Bessillon hills was stabilised yesterday morning, meaning its perimeter had not expanded overnight. But unlike the Gironde fire, it had not yet been declared contained.

Firefighting aircraft helped crews to keep the flames away from villages among the vineyards, olive groves and wooded hills of the region known as Green Provence. About 2,500 people were evacuated.

The prime minister, Sébastien Lecornu, said France's wildfires were generally under control but cautioned that conditions remained highly changeable. He also announced that a national coordinator attached to the prime minister's office would oversee reconstruction in fire-ravaged areas.

More than 452 sq miles have burned across France since the beginning of the year.

Additional reporting
Associated Press

Sea change

Ireland steps up defence in face of Russia threat

Jennifer Rankin
Cork and Brussels

For a long time, Ireland paid little attention to its surrounding seas, a vast maritime area 10 times the size of the land.

Alarm bells began ringing only when a Russian spy ship, the Yantar, started visiting Irish waters. The vessel, ostensibly a research ship, is believed to be capable of attaching spy equipment to undersea cables. While loitering in the Irish Sea in 2024, the ship remained over a gas pipeline connecting Ireland and the UK and turned on its transponder, as if broadcasting its proximity to critical infrastructure.

In recent weeks, Irish officials have also noticed a rise in Russian shadow fleet vessels traversing the north Atlantic to circumvent British and French waters, where controls have been stepped up.

The Russian presence in or near Irish waters underscores that Ireland, which has long viewed itself as protected by geography - out of sight and out of mind - is really on the frontline.

And the threat is broad. Irish waters are busy: dense with shipping lanes, gas pipelines and transatlantic internet cables. Nearly 75% of transatlantic subsea cables pass through or close to Ireland's exclusive economic zone, the 200-nautical mile space where it has sovereign rights over natural resources, which is seven times greater than the land mass. It has more limited jurisdiction over an even broader area.

When Ireland took charge of the EU's rotating presidency this month, it had a message. While its totemic neutrality is not up for debate, the days of Ireland's slumber on defence are over. Security is listed as a priority of Ireland's six months chairing the Council of the EU. Ireland would be working with other European nations "on shared objectives and priorities in defending our critical infrastructure, and making sure that we are focused on security more broadly", Ireland's foreign minister, Helen McEntee, told reporters this month.

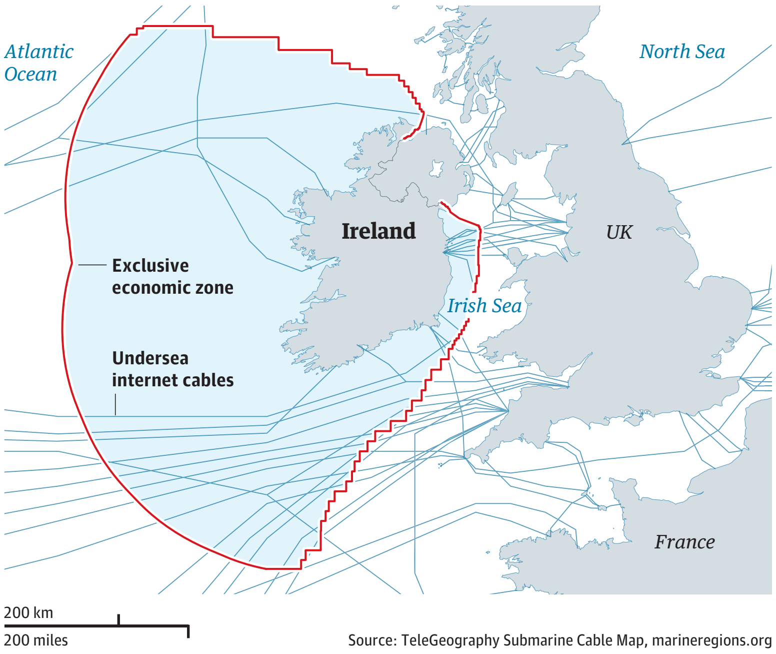
That sounds unremarkable, but signals a reassessment of Ireland's approach to defence. In February, McEntee published Ireland's first ever maritime strategy, which aims to end Ireland's "sea blindness" - the sense that security was purely about the land. Officially, it aims to ensure Ireland can defend its maritime domain, including critical undersea infrastructure.

The retired Irish naval officer Caoimhín Mac Unfraidh described the maritime strategy as "a good effort", but added: "What is needed is … new ships, with new capabilities, recruitment campaigns and several more bases." In 2025, Ireland's government confirmed only two ships were in operation out of a fleet of eight, partly because of a staffing crisis.

The broader neglect of the military was highlighted this month, when Volodymyr Zelenskyy turned down an offer from Dublin to send 27 light-armoured combat vehicles to Ukraine. "The cost of restoring them is higher than the value they would provide," the Ukrainian president said.

Ireland has pledged €1.7bn (£1.4bn) in defence capital spending for 2026-30, a 55% increase on the previous period. But it remains the lowest defence spender in the EU. In 2024, Ireland spent just 0.2% of its gross domestic product on defence, far behind the 1.3% EU average.

Meanwhile, people see the cost of living, housing and immigration as Ireland's most important issues, according to a recent poll. Foreign and security issues were barely on the radar: 5% cited the war in Ukraine and 4% defence.



Source: TeleGeography Submarine Cable Map, marineregions.org

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Swanky revamp
M&S unveils updated landmark store
Page 31

Business

Global economy 'at increasing risk from climate emergency'

Richard Partington
Senior economics correspondent

A senior policymaker at the European Central Bank has said the climate emergency and the breakdown of nature poses a dramatically growing risk to the global economy.

Frank Elderson, a member of the ECB's executive board, said the eurozone lender of last resort was stepping up its monitoring of the financial risks linked to the destruction of "ecosystem services", which are nature-related processes or assets that support human activity.

"These services are not stable, but they are in rapid decline. That's why we talk about the climate and nature crises," he said. "So knowing that dependency, and knowing those exposures by the banks, we come to the conclusion that this is relevant."

Wildfires have raged across France and Spain amid record-breaking temperatures, torching land, businesses and homes in an emergency that will carry a heavy economic cost beside the direct human toll.

In an interview with the Guardian before the current devastation across Europe, Elderson said it was clear the rising frequency of natural disasters linked to global heating posed a threat to financial stability.

He said more work needed to be done to assess the risk from the collapse of ecosystem services, as reliance on nature was more complicated to map than the impact of a single extreme weather event.

Ecosystem services are defined as any benefit that can be drawn from a natural structure or process – for example, water can be used as a raw material, an energy source through hydropower, or for transportation. It is also a habitat for marine life critical for food production, and a basis for recreational services.

"Nature-related risks can pose material economic and financial risks, including through their impacts on credit risk, growth, inflation and – over the long term – potential financial instability," Elderson said.

> ***'If you destroy nature, you destroy the core on which our economies depend'***
>
> **Frank Elderson**
> *European Central Bank*

"I did interviews saying, you know, if you destroy nature, you destroy the core on which our economies depend. And that got people's attention. This is not some kind of a flower power, tree-hugging exercise. This is core economics. This is core financial stability, core price stability."

As the supervisor of Europe's largest banks, the ECB has begun assessing how the escalating damage to ecosystem services could expose the financial system to risk. The central bank plans to publish analysis this year investigating how "ecosystem degradation pathways" could translate into credit loss dynamics for the eurozone's banks.

A Dutch lawyer and central banker, Elderson was instrumental in the creation of the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) in 2017, alongside Mark Carney and François Villeroy de Galhau, the then chiefs of the Bank of England and Banque de France. He served as founding chair of the group of 114 global central banks and financial supervisors pushing to develop climate risk management.

The green agenda in financial services has faced pushback under the US presidency of Donald Trump, as some businesses battle to remain engaged in the fossil-fuel economy.

Trump pulled the US out of the NGFS last year, leaving Europe to take the lead on climate-related risks without the involvement of the world's most powerful economy.

However, Elderson said the banking industry remained convinced that climate and nature-related risks had to be addressed. "I would think it's very difficult to find a bank in Europe that will honestly tell you that they think this is not relevant," he said. "I think that time has passed."

Solar power hit record 14.4% share of British electricity supply in July

Jillian Ambrose
Energy correspondent

Solar energy supplied more power to Great Britain's grid in July than in any previous month as households turned to rooftop panels to cut their energy bills.

Solar farms and rooftop panels provided 14.4% of the country's electricity after some parts of the UK recorded almost twice the average sunshine hours for the time of year.

The long spells of cloudless weather helped solar to smash the previous monthly record of 12.4% set in May.

There were more new solar power installations in the first half of this year than in any six-month period since 2011, according to official figures. The data, which includes large, ground-mounted solar farms and rooftop panels, tracked 142,536 solar installations, putting 2026 on track to top last year's record solar additions.

The lion's share of the new solar installations recorded were on household rooftops, making up slightly less than a third of the country's total solar power capacity.

▲ *Rooftop solar panels on a church in Melbourne, Derbyshire. Solar power installations have surged this year* PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW FOX/ALAMY

Households have fitted solar panels to their rooftops hoping to cut their energy bills by generating their own low-cost electricity as fossil fuels have caused bills to rocket, according to energy companies.

Chris Hewett, the chief executive of the trade association Solar Energy UK said: "Fifteen years ago solar energy was a footnote in the electricity mix. Now it is a major player, delivering homegrown, cheap, clean and reliable energy."

A typical UK home with rooftop solar panels powered the equivalent of more than five hours of air-conditioning each day during the June heatwave, when temperatures reached a peak for the summer so far, according to Ember, a clean power thinktank.

Great Britain's new solar additions include the largest operating project in the UK at Cleve Hill in Kent . The 373 megawatt (MW) project dwarfs the UK's first solar farm, the 1.4MW Wheal Jane project in Cornwall but will soon be overtaken by the largest planned solar farm in development: the 800MW Springwell site in Lincolnshire, which is expected to begin generating in 2029.

Michael Shanks, the energy minister, said: "The more power we generate here in Britain, the less exposed families and businesses are to global energy price shocks."

Healey warns retailers he is 'watching closely' over profiteering

Sarah Butler

The chancellor, John Healey, has said the government is standing by to prevent the public "being taken for a ride at the pump or the till" as the Iran war continues to hit prices.

While there has been "no significant evidence of so-called price gouging" during the crisis, he used a weekend column to tell the big retailers that ministers were "watching closely" for any signs of profiteering.

Healey faces a difficult economic balancing act as the energy price shock caused by the months-long conflict in the Middle East reignites the cost of living crisis.

Last week the Bank of England kept interest rates on hold as it warned a further escalation in the Iran war could drive inflation above 4% next year.

"The conflict affects our national security, our UK bases, personnel and allies in the Middle East," said Healey, writing for the Telegraph. "But it also threatens our economic security: impacting the family finances of millions of British people. And I know that many British businesses have been put under pressure by increasing costs too.

"Conflict and uncertainty increases inflation, threatens growth and pushes up costs for businesses and governments alike."

The comments about profiteering threaten a new war of words between the government and retailers. Amid ongoing public concern about the cost of living, it emerged earlier this year that Rachel Reeves, then the chancellor, had raised the prospect of a cap on food prices to limit inflation caused by the Middle East conflict.

The proposals prompted a backlash from supermarket bosses, with Stuart Machin, the chief executive of Marks & Spencer, calling the plans "completely preposterous".

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) trade body suggested the chancellor should be looking at the effect of tax increases – including employers' national insurance contributions and business rates – on inflation.

Andrew Opie of the BRC said: "Supermarkets operate in a highly competitive environment delivering the most affordable food in western Europe. The government's independent competition regulator, the CMA [Competition and Markets Authority], has repeatedly found that fierce competition between retailers, not government action, has kept food prices as low as possible."

Economics viewpoint

Burnham's devolution will be tricky to deliver

Richard Partington

On the road to Downing Street, Andy Burnham promised to transfer power from Westminster to every postcode in the country. After his first two weeks in office, the size and complexity of this project are becoming clearer.

With a date set for the autumn budget, the work of filling in the detail that will underpin his devolution plans begins – starting with his proposal to hand England's regional mayors a share of income tax to support local economic development.

The UK is among the most fiscally centralised countries in the developed world. The Centre for Cities estimates as little as 5% of tax revenue stays with mayors and local authorities. The rest goes straight to Whitehall and is allocated by central government. By contrast, 14% of tax stays local in France, and 22% in Japan.

For years British devolution has been a messy patchwork in which Westminster has largely clung on to its position as ringmaster; just ask the parties pushing for independence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But the system in England is the messiest of the lot.

Under the Conservatives, the creation of dozens of ringfenced funding pots fostered a begging-bowl culture. They were also no match for the billions of pounds in central government grant funding that were cut under austerity.

Burnham allowing mayors to retain a share of locally generated tax revenues is, therefore, a good idea in principle. Many economists say the idea – first announced by Rachel Reeves in March – would help to tackle Britain's deep regional inequalities.

In practice, the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that between 6% and 9% of local income tax revenues would be sufficient to fully replace the "integrated settlements" the mayoral authorities currently receive. But it will take time to introduce the plan and there are wrinkles to iron out – not least how to avoid weaker local economies falling behind.

London and Greater Manchester are in pole position. The West Midlands and South Yorkshire are in a slower lane. If the winners get to keep a rising share of income tax, the laggards would risk a self-fulfilling cycle of weak growth.

The reforms will also take a long time to bear fruit for a prime minister in a hurry. It will be 2028 before the income tax plan comes into full effect. Dozens of new mayoralties are still in the process of being created – with a deadline of the end of that year to give people in Essex, Stoke-on-Trent and Warrington similar powers to the mayoralties of London and Manchester.

Burnham: economists support his plan

Last month the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development gave devolution a ringing endorsement. But it also warned that the starting point in Britain makes it challenging.

First and foremost will be the challenge of repairing the damage caused by the Tory austerity years. English local government is a shadow of its pre-2010 self. Most places lack the staff and expertise to use their new money and powers well, at a time when many are struggling to do the basics such as collecting bins or filling potholes.

Across England's town halls, the workforce has plunged since 2009 from 2.2 million to about 1.1 million. While Greater Manchester and the West Midlands have established sophisticated analytical, policy and delivery teams – enabling them to make better use of the devolved powers – the OECD says many authorities have a shortage of resources and have limited technical expertise.

The risk of making bad spending decisions is high. The shenanigans in Tees Valley, Birmingham, and the multibillion-pound debts amassed in Woking, Warrington and Thurrock are a serious red flag. Labour inherited a broken local audit system, evidenced by the fact that only 1% of places published audited accounts for 2022-23 by the original deadline.

The loss of the Audit Commission (abolished by the Tories) and the death of local journalism has removed important checks and balances.

However, devolution could be transformative for the economy. Local leaders are best placed to understand how to support growth in their area.

According to the Centre for Cities, measures to integrate bus, tram and train networks in the six largest English cities outside London would better connect 1.2 million people to their nearest city centre, generating productivity gains worth an estimated £17bn. The OECD finds that countries with higher levels of tax and spending devolution tend to have higher wages.

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M&S makeover

Is the swanky revamp enough to 'dump the frump'

▼ *M&S models at Silverstone, where they put on a fashion show before the Formula One British Grand Prix*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARK SUTTON/FORMULA 1/GETTY

Sarah Butler

On a hot summer's evening on London's busy Oxford Street, a crowd of fashion influencers, models, journalists and the odd City analyst gathered for a first look at the upmarket revamp of Marks & Spencer's landmark Pantheon store.

Some may have had to double-check they had the right address, such is the scale of the makeover at the 88-year-old outlet, which is intended as a blueprint for change across the retailer's more than 200 large stores.

"We know we've got a big job modernising the store experience and modernising the online experience as well," M&S's chief executive, Stuart Machin, told the crowd. A collection of "legacy old stores" had remained profitable, he said, so "most previous leadership just kept them open".

But Machin has a bigger vision. He is an exacting, obsessive leader who loves to wade into the detail of store operations and warehouse refurbishments. He once admitted to disliking "all this talk about work-life balance". Four years into the job, he is keen to leave his mark on the 142-year-old retail group.

After a tough year marred by a cyber-attack that knocked out M&S's online trading for almost seven weeks and hit profits by more than £300m, Machin told shareholders at its recent annual meeting that the year ahead was "one of the most important in our history". He went on to say: "The next three years are critical for M&S as we invest for growth."

The Pantheon, built in the late 18th century, was an opera house and entertainment venue before its reconstruction for M&S in the 1930s. With its latest revamp finished, the next big project for the retailer is its Marble Arch store, at the other end of Oxford Street.

Machin said the group's most profitable but rather low-ceilinged and labyrinthine outlet would be knocked down next year, a plan that has prompted outrage over the potential environmental impact.

The new, 10-storey building won planning permission only after a legal challenge and approval by the communities secretary, Angela Rayner, in 2024. It will include just two and a half floors of shop space – there are five at present – topped by offices and a gym, and will stand at the eastern tip of the London mayor Sadiq Khan's planned pedestrianisation of Oxford Street.

THE PANTHEON
MARKS & SPENCER
M&S FOOD

▲ *The revamped Pantheon store in London, where fashion floors, left, are broken up into bright 'rooms' for different brands, with digital displays and modern shelving*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARKS AND SPENCERS

> ***'We know we've got a big job modernising the store experience and modernising the online experience as well'***

Stuart Machin
M&S chief executive

The rebuild is expected to take four years, during which M&S will lease a temporary store across the road. Machin told those gathered at the Pantheon that "hopefully" he would still be chief executive when the Marble Arch rebuild was completed, adding: "So let's see how we do."

It is a question many shoppers and analysts may well be asking as Machin, backed by his retail veteran chair, Archie Norman, attempt to lead a turnaround of M&S that actually sticks and extends beyond a few high-profile outlets.

Several predecessors have come up with flashy, short-lived revival plans to combat competition from Primark, H&M, Zara and younger, online rivals. After losing momentum, M&S only briefly regained annual pre-tax profits of £1bn in 2008, having first reached that milestone in 1998.

Despite a global financial crisis, Brexit, the coronavirus pandemic and the cyber-attack, the retailer appears to be on the front foot – with strong food sales and fashion credentials to match.

Underlying profits fell to £671m last year, and Machin told the Guardian that climbing back to £1bn was not the aim. "Profit will be what it will be," he said. "Our plan is for a growth business."

While some shareholders may complain about lacklustre dividends, Machin said they would thank him in the long term. His plan involves £700m of investments in revitalising stores, modernising the supply chain and distribution system, and further improvements in products.

The group, which employs more than 65,000 people, has 227 full-line stores – containing food, clothing, homewares and beauty – after closing dozens of old and out-of-place outlets. More will shut over the next two years, and a handful of new outlets are opening. The group aims to have 200 full-line stores in the UK.

In contrast, M&S's food arm is expanding, with 18 food-only stores opening this year as it heads for a target of 420, compared with 335 directly operated outlets now. Franchise partners run a further 466 in Britain and more overseas.

A wave of new food stores and some cheaper groceries may have brought a broader range of shopper into M&S, but Machin said the retailer was "just at the starting blocks" with changes in fashion, home and beauty. The Pantheon store is "where we're testing how we make shopping our ranges easier, more curated and more inspiring", he said.

The fashion floors are now broken up into bright "rooms" for different brands and product types, – flanked by digital displays, green-tiled pillars and modern shelving.

On food, M&S is aiming to become a "true shopping-list retailer" as it aims to double sales. It is already the fastest-growing food retailer in Britain, with sales up 16% in the latest three-month tally from Worldpanel by Numerator. This has kept its market share at a record high of 4.1%, or 4.6% if sales via its online partner Ocado are included.

On clothing, Machin has said M&S had "finally dumped the frump" – grasping the No 1 spot on style perception from its Spanish rival Zara to add to its existing top position on value, according to Worldpanel. M&S is regaining market share – now controlling more than 10% of the UK fashion (clothing and footwear) market – and driving for more. With the help of its marketing director, Sharry Cramond, who is bringing the social media-fuelled interest to fashion that she first delivered on food, the brand is creating a buzz.

Senior industry insiders believe M&S is now "in a solid place". One said it had "re-established itself and its credentials", and another that it had "a lot more self-confidence". "Clothing has finally got its mojo back," according to one former senior executive.

But another former executive said: "It has lost a massive amount of market share on womenswear which it will never recover."

An industry insider said M&S, which once had a vast empire, was continuing to struggle overseas. Machin said revamping the international business had been harder than he envisaged, but that the fashion revival was helping.

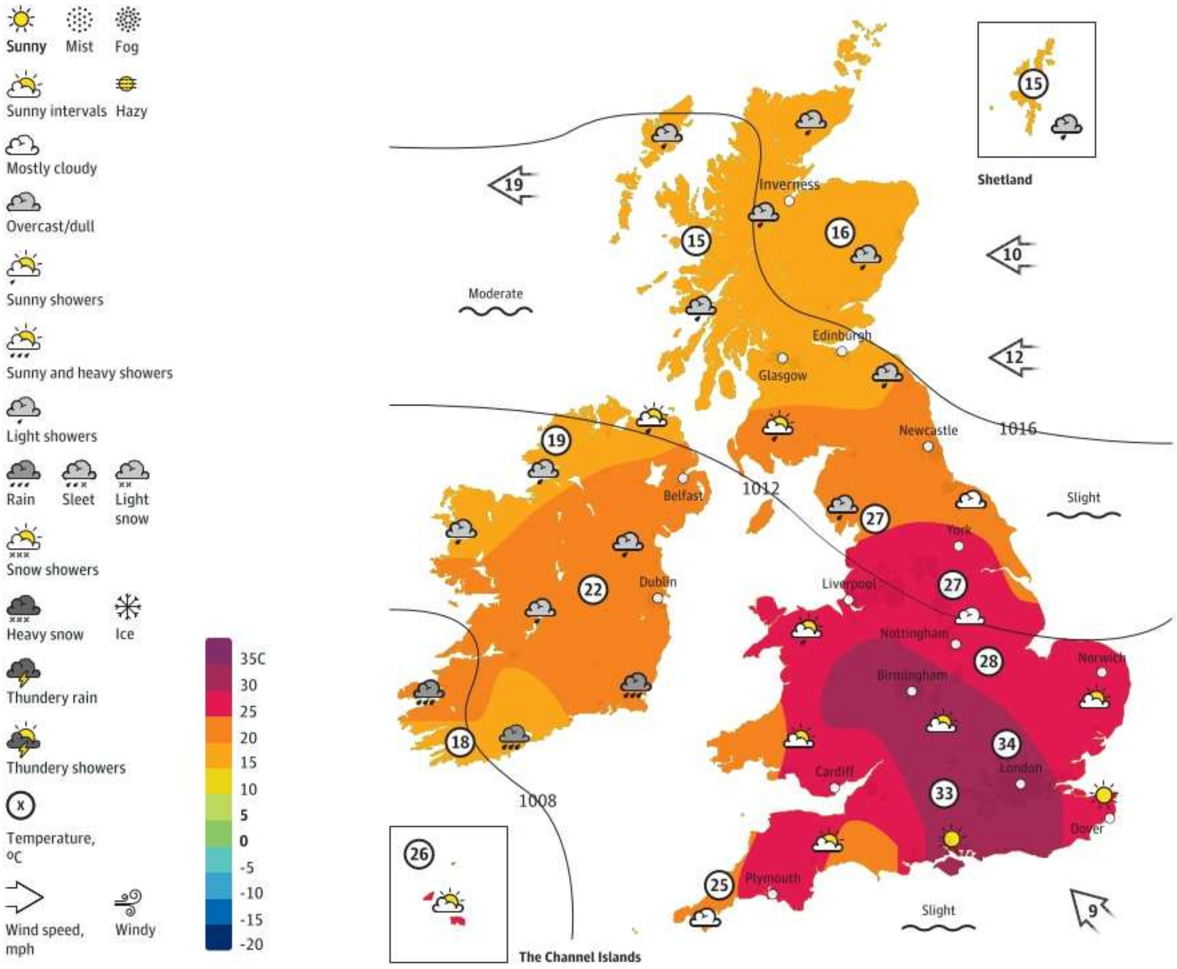
Perhaps Machin's biggest challenge lies behind the scenes, with big warehouse projects in the next few years in south-west England and the Midlands.

"Deadlines are realistic. We are not going from zero to 10 overnight," he said.

Weather

Monday 3 August 2026

UK and Ireland Noon today


Sunny
Mist
Fog
Sunny intervals
Hazy
Mostly cloudy
Overcast/dull
Sunny showers
Sunny and heavy showers
Light showers
Rain
Sleet
Light snow
Snow showers
Heavy snow
Ice
Thundery rain
Thundery showers
Temperature, ºC
Wind speed, mph
Windy
35C
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
-5
-10
-15
-20
Shetland
15
19
Inverness
15
16
10
Moderate
Edinburgh
Glasgow
12
Newcastle
1016
19
Belfast
1012
27
Slight
York
22
Dublin
Liverpool
27
Nottingham
28
Norwich
Birmingham
18
34
London
Cardiff
1008
33
Dover
26
25
Plymouth
Slight
9
The Channel Islands

Forecast

Low 16 High 25
Tomorrow

Low 15 High 21
Wednesday

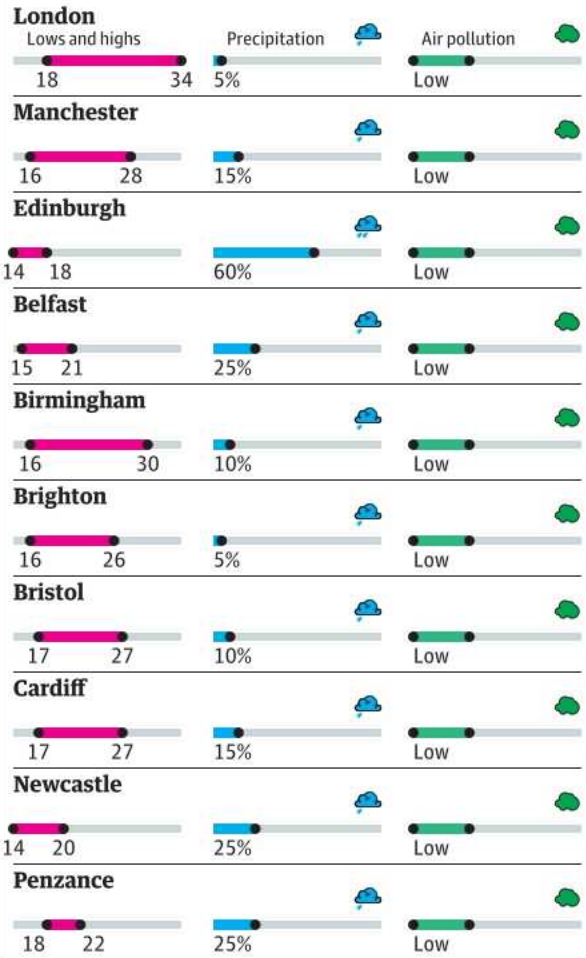
Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

Latest	
28 Jul 2026	429.01
Weekly average	
19 Jul 2026	428.72
02 Aug 2025	427.58
02 Aug 2016	403.35
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

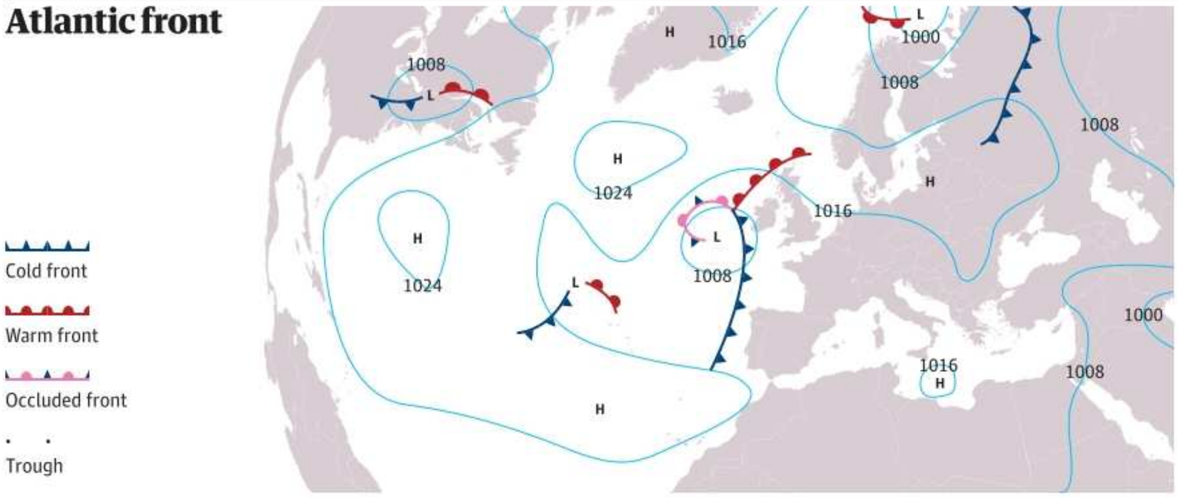
Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK



	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	18 – 34	5%	Low
Manchester	16 – 28	15%	Low
Edinburgh	14 – 18	60%	Low
Belfast	15 – 21	25%	Low
Birmingham	16 – 30	10%	Low
Brighton	16 – 26	5%	Low
Bristol	17 – 27	10%	Low
Cardiff	17 – 27	15%	Low
Newcastle	14 – 20	25%	Low
Penzance	18 – 22	25%	Low

Atlantic front


Cold front
Warm front
Occluded front
Trough
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1008
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High tides

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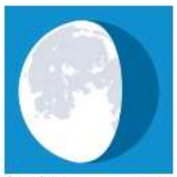
Aberdeen	**0347**	4.2m	**1626**	3.9m
Avonmouth	**0958**	12.1m	**2213**	12.2m
Barrow	**0149**	8.9m	**1414**	8.5m
Belfast	**0122**	3.5m	**1352**	3.2m
Cobh	**0805**	3.8m	**2027**	3.9m
Cromer	**0853**	5.0m	**2147**	4.5m
Dover	**0122**	6.3m	**1342**	6.6m
Dublin	**0158**	4.0m	**1431**	3.7m
Galway	**0753**	4.6m	**2004**	4.8m
Greenock	**0252**	3.5m	**1517**	3.2m
Harwich	**0223**	3.8m	**1423**	3.8m
Holyhead	**0046**	5.5m	**1309**	5.1m
Hull	**0854**	7.3m	**2126**	6.8m
Leith	**0508**	5.4m	**1743**	5.1m
Liverpool	**0131**	9.1m	**1352**	8.7m
London Bridge	**0431**	6.8m	**1643**	6.8m
Lossiemouth	**0213**	4.0m	**1448**	3.7m
Milford Haven	**0853**	6.5m	**2113**	6.7m
Newquay	**0746**	6.4m	**2006**	6.6m
North Shields	**0553**	5.0m	**1829**	4.6m
Oban	**0812**	3.5m	**2040**	3.7m
Penzance	**0718**	5.1m	**1938**	5.3m
Plymouth	**0833**	5.0m	**2040**	5.2m
Portsmouth	**0148**	4.4m	**1427**	4.5m
Southport	**0105**	8.8m	**1326**	8.4m
Stornoway	**0931**	4.2m	**2145**	4.6m
Portland	**0925**	1.8m	**2137**	1.9m
Whitby	**0629**	5.5m	**1905**	5.1m
Wick	**0143**	3.4m	**1418**	3.1m
Workington	**0155**	8.1m	**1417**	7.6m

Sun & Moon



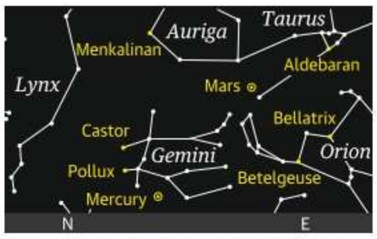
Sun rises	0527
Sun sets	2045
Moon rises	2210
Moon sets	1102
Last Quarter	6 Aug

AccuWeather.com
Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2026

Lighting up

Belfast	2122 to 0541
Birm'ham	2055 to 0532
Brighton	2043 to 0531
Bristol	2055 to 0540
Carlisle	2110 to 0526
Cork	2120 to 0601
Dublin	2117 to 0546
Glasgow	2121 to 0528
Harlech	2106 to 0540
Inverness	2128 to 0518
London	2045 to 0528
M'chester	2101 to 0530
Newcastle	2106 to 0521
Norwich	2044 to 0519
Penzance	2102 to 0555

Starwatch


Menkalinan
Auriga
Taurus
Aldebaran
Lynx
Mars
Bellatrix
Castor
Gemini
Orion
Pollux
Betelgeuse
Mercury
N
E

This week offers one of the better opportunities of the year to catch a glimpse of the solar system's innermost world. Trapped in its small orbit, Mercury never strays far from the sun, meaning it is usually lost to the light of dawn or dusk. Yesterday, however, the planet reached its greatest western elongation, meaning it appeared at its greatest apparent distance from the sun in the morning sky.

An early start and an unobstructed view east-north-east will be essential for the sighting. The chart shows the view looking in this direction from London at 4.30am tomorrow. If your line of sight is free from obstructions, the planet will become visible about a handspan above the horizon some time between 4.30am and 5am. Binoculars can help, but sunrise tomorrow from London occurs at 5.28am, so stop using binoculars well before this time to protect your eyesight. **Stuart Clark**

Around the world

Algiers	37	Lisbon	26
Ams'dam	32	Madrid	33
Athens	35	Malaga	37
Auckland	15	Melb'rne	15
B Aires	16	Mexico C	25
Bangkok	33	Miami	33
Barcelona	31	Milan	38
Basra	50	Mombasa	28
Beijing	33	Moscow	25
Berlin	29	Mumbai	30
Bermuda	30	N Orleans	34
Brussels	33	Nairobi	22
Budapest	37	New Delhi	33
C'hagen	22	New York	27
Cairo	37	Oslo	22
Cape Town	22	Paris	35
Chicago	27	Perth	22
Corfu	33	Prague	32
Dakar	31	Reykjavik	13
Dhaka	31	Rio de J	25
Dublin	21	Rome	33
Florence	39	Shanghai	36
Gibraltar	31	Singapore	32
H Kong	28	Stockh'm	20
Harare	22	Strasb'g	37
Helsinki	21	Sydney	23
Istanbul	31	Tel Aviv	33
Jo'burg	18	Tenerife	30
K Lumpur	32	Tokyo	28
K'mandu	26	Toronto	26
Kabul	34	Vancouv'r	23
Kingston	33	Vienna	38
Kolkata	32	Warsaw	30
L Angeles	31	Wash'ton	30
Lagos	28	Well'ton	15
Lima	24	Zurich	35

Football

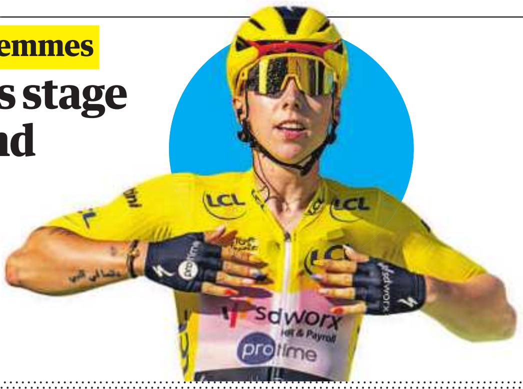
Ravenna revels in the arrival of Ronaldinho

Page 34 →

Tour de France Femmes

Wiebes wins stage two to extend overall lead

Page 39 →



Sport

Rugby league

London have grandest of plans but remain stuck in limbo

▲ *Alex Max touches down for London Broncos as they make it 20 wins from 20 at Widnes Vikings*
BRUCE ROLLINSON/SHUTTERSTOCK

Broncos have conquered all so far this season but on-pitch success may not secure a Super League place

Aaron Bower
DCBL Stadium

For almost the entirety of their 40-year existence, London Broncos have felt eternally stuck in rugby league purgatory. From the name changes - Fulham, London Crusaders, Harlequins and now the Broncos - to their nomadic existence across almost every corner of the capital, they have just never managed to capture the attention of enough people.

But this year, the club finds itself in a very different kind of limbo. Having gone desperately close to going out of business last year, the Broncos were saved by the Australia great Darren Lockyer and his business partner, Grant Wechsel. Their goal was simple: invest as heavily as possible, as quickly as possible, to get London not just back to Super League, but competing there.

It looks to be working. Yesterday, the Broncos made it 20 wins from 20 in the Championship after beating Widnes Vikings. They will, barring a major miracle, go on to win the grand final with a star-studded squad that is led by former Kangaroos prop Reagan Campbell-Gillard.

Herein lies the problem, though. Whereas in most sports, the best team in the second division would get promoted to the top flight, rugby league is different. Each October, the highest-ranked 14 clubs in the IMG-devised gradings system get access to Super League - and they are graded on a variety of metrics, not just on-field performance.

It means that even though London are a better fit for Super League than at least one or two existing top-flight clubs, they have to wait three more months to discover their fate. There is a nervous feeling that they may not get enough grading points to do it. So they are, once again, stuck in purgatory.

London's owners are determined to make them a force, though. "There were just three members of staff when we took over last year," Wechsel says. "The staffing levels now are of Super League standard. But we've been in limbo for so long now, waiting on the gradings. Our score will have a significant increase but we're impacted by it being weighted over a number of years."

Wechsel and Lockyer have already invested millions. It is a throwback to the days when the Broncos were being bankrolled by Richard Branson in their previous heyday of the 1990s but this time, the ownership are adamant they are here to stay.

However, another season in the Championship would derail their long-term vision, and Wechsel admits they are pushing to find out what division they will be playing in as quickly as possible. "The sooner we know, the more we can do," he says. "It's hard to get big names from Australia without Super League rugby but if we get it, we'll get big names.

"We are trying to super-charge rugby league in London but also rugby league full stop. Every big club I speak to sees us as good for the game. I understand some other clubs might see us a threat, without naming them. But they're not growing the game commercially; we think we can do that."

The Guardian has been told by people close to the NRL that if they take control of Super League in the coming weeks then London will be in, such is the importance of the capital is to the wider plans of the governing body for global expansion.

> ***'We are trying to super-charge rugby league in London but also rugby league full stop'***

▲ *Robert Mathias is held up on the line by last-ditch Widnes defence*
BRUCE ROLLINSON/SHUTTERSTOCK

"I know they've publicly said they want us in," Wechsel says. "It was promising hearing Peter [V'Landys, the interim NRL CEO] say he is turning his attention to Super League. I don't think it's any great secret that having London in Super League makes your game stronger, and the NRL know that. But it's a strong London the game needs, not just London."

If London do get the green light through any access point - expansion to 15 teams, the gradings or the NRL forcing Super League's hand - the plans are huge. They want to play in Las Vegas in 2028, have said they will do a double-header with a regular season NRL game in London: and they want to play Wigan at Craven Cottage, a throwback to their Fulham days.

Wechsel says Lockyer's ownership of London and their story is capturing more air-time in Australia than the Perth Bears, who will become the newest NRL team in 2027. But for the millions they are investing to make London a rugby league force, there is one long-standing challenge money seemingly cannot alter.

"Capturing attention on the ground in London … that's been as tough as we thought it would be," he says. "But it's a bit chicken and egg. Being in Super League would make a huge difference; we think people in London would be immediately more interested if Wigan and Leeds were visiting - but most importantly if we were competing with them. We want to be in the playoffs and pushing for trophies the second we're in Super League and we have the capital to do it."

In the immediate term, London have four league games left in pursuit of an unbeaten Championship campaign; Goole Vikings are the visitors to Wimbledon this Sunday.

They will continue to tick off the wins but they and the sport's vision for London are stuck in limbo until the autumn, it seems.

Marketing gimmick or symbol of revival? Ravenna fans ride wave of Ronaldinho effect

Brazil legend's arrival at the Serie C club at the age of 46 has divided supporters - but the businessman who arranged the extraordinary deal has high hopes

Emanuele Giulianelli
Ravenna

On a scorching summer afternoon in Ravenna, a city far better known for its fifth-century Byzantine mosaics and Dante's tomb than for footballing glory, eyes are peeled in the historic centre for one of the world game's most recognisable figures - a man who featured in the World Cup final half-time show with Madonna and Ronaldo: Ronaldo de Assis Moreira, better known as Ronaldinho.

▲ *Ravenna aims to add football to the city's traditional attractions*

AVANTI LEONI
RAVENNA FOOTBALL CLUB
CIPRIANI
UNA SQUADRA, UNA CITTÀ: FORZA RAVENNA!

▼ *Ravenna fans Francesco Zannoni, Fabio Pagani, Giovanni Lama and Marcello Lama; (below) the club's modest Stadio Bruno Benelli*
ROBERTO SALOMONE/THE GUARDIAN

"We haven't seen him yet," four Ravenna supporters sitting at a cafe say with dry irony as they flip through La Gazzetta dello Sport, Italy's famous pink sports daily newspaper. They are undeniably sceptical, viewing the signing as a purely commercial operation, yet deep down they still harbour the dream of seeing the 2005 Ballon d'Or and 2002 World Cup winner wear their team's yellow and red shirt.

It is a small, surreal glimpse into the whirlwind that has engulfed this quiet corner of Emilia-Romagna, thanks to the business instincts of Ignazio Cipriani. Heir to the Venetian hospitality dynasty behind the renowned Harry's Bar, Cipriani took over the club in 2024 when they were in Serie D, the fourth tier of Italian football. A native of Ravenna, he is the grandson of Raul Gardini, the Italian chemicals tycoon and sailor who steered Il Moro di Venezia to the 1992 America's Cup final.

In his first year as president, Cipriani oversaw victory in the Serie D Cup and promotion to the professional ranks of Serie C. But that is merely the first step in a long ascent, he says: "It's not a provocation. Serie A is the goal I declared from day one because I intend to reach it. And the Champions League remains the ultimate horizon we want to walk towards, step by step.

"I made this statement because I like working with my back against the wall: when you have no way out, you are forced to find solutions instead of excuses. I prefer to remove every alibi from the beginning."

And this summer Cipriani pulled off a surprise move - so surprising that anyone reading the headlines assumed it was a prank: bringing the 46-year-old Ronaldinho back as a player. "We met through Lorenzo Tonetti and Ariedo Braida," Cipriani says, "two people who worked for over 20 years at AC Milan and had Ronaldinho as a player. The idea of involving him was a dream I cultivated as soon as I bought the club. Thanks to Lorenzo and Ariedo, we met, started talking, and a genuine friendship grew. From that relationship came many ideas for the club's growth.

"And to the question everyone is asking, I am happy to answer: Ronaldinho will wear the Ravenna shirt as a player, and he will try - maybe scoring the last goal of his career with us!"

Meanwhile, a dedicated website has already put a special-edition shirt on sale featuring the "R10" logo - the Brazilian's personal brand - which sold out within a few hours. It constitutes a striking collision of high-end global branding, small-town football, and brilliantly executed marketing stunt.

'It's no provocation. Serie A is the goal I declared from day one because I intend to reach it'

"If someone had told me three years ago that Ronaldinho was coming to Ravenna, I would have sent them straight to the psychiatric ward," laughs Fabio, a lifelong supporter. "The night the news broke, international headlines everywhere read 'Ronaldinho to Ravenna'. It was an extraordinary operation."

Ravenna is no footballing giant. Hit by bankruptcies in 2001 and 2012, the club have spent decades bouncing around the lower tiers, with seven seasons in Serie B the highest point. The area is historically a volleyball stronghold, and the local football scene was accustomed to modest budgets and regional rivalries.

"Ronaldinho is a unique icon," Cipriani says. "His way of playing made my generation fall in love with the game. We want him today to make the next generation of fans, in Italy and around the world, fall in love with Ravenna FC. It's not just a visibility stunt; it's about building a bridge between different eras of football and growing a truly global fanbase around it."

▲ *The mayor, Alessandro Barattoni, wants to expand the city's profile*

▼ *Ronaldinho is welcomed to his new club by Ignazio Cipriani*
REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP

ONALDINHO
10
Poliform

To support this ambitious sporting and industrial project, the club are working with the municipality to renovate the Stadio Bruno Benelli, increasing its capacity beyond 6,300. But the president's ultimate dream is a new multi-purpose venue that is open seven days a week, featuring retail spaces, concert facilities, and an integrated Hotel Cipriani linked to the city's international tourism expansion.

For Ravenna's mayor, Alessandro Barattoni, the arrival of a world-famous figure fits neatly into a broader strategy to promote the city globally. In recent years, Ravenna has been expanding its international reach beyond traditional beach tourism and commercial ports. The city is enjoying renewed ties with the Anglo-Saxon world, highlighted by a recent visit from the British royal family and the opening of the Lord Byron Museum.

"Ronaldinho brings a whole new level of global fame," Barattoni says. "When the news broke, my phone exploded with messages from former schoolmates. For younger kids today, he might be someone to discover on YouTube, but the fascination remains intact." With a smile, the mayor adds that, schedule permitting, he would be delighted to personally guide Ronaldinho on a tour of the city's cultural heritage.

However, Barattoni is quick to clarify the institution's role: "Our common ground with the club is internationalisation: bringing Ravenna's image to the world. Ronaldinho has been a global ambassador for countless brands. There is an overarching project that can bring great visibility to the team and allow the city to showcase its initiatives beyond standard routes. Even before Ronaldinho's arrival, the club did a fantastic job engaging younger generations. The average age in the stands is lower, more vibrant, and more engaged than ever before. A genuine sense of community is forming."

Yet, fears of a hyper-commercialised image linger among traditional supporters. In the Curva Mero, such marketing moves are approached with caution. "There is a certain reluctance among some factions," Fabio admits. "Modern football pushes values that many don't share: rising ticket prices, losing accessibility for lower-income families. As a result, visibility and marketing stunts risk being viewed sideways."

Cipriani demonstrates an acute awareness of these dynamics: "Without roots, no global project makes sense," the president says. "Ravenna is not a brand we are building from scratch; it's a history and an identity that existed before us. Tradition isn't a brake on ambition: it's the foundation. A club without its people is worth nothing."

"I'm 50 years old and I've been coming to the stadium since my school days," says Giovanni, another fan. "I'm rediscovering the enthusiasm of the past. If it takes an icon like Ronaldinho and a local entrepreneur to make us dream of Serie A, then so be it. The important thing is never to forget the people in the stands."

Riding the wave of the "Ronaldinho effect", the season-ticket campaign has just launched with a target of selling 2,800. Ticket prices have risen by an average of about 12%, with variations across different stadium sections.

For now, Ravenna is soaking up a dizzying, galvanising atmosphere. On the pitch, the club are assembling a squad to win the league; off it, the city awaits 20 August, when Ronaldinho is expected to appear during a three-day summer festival in the nearby Marina di Ravenna, organised in signature Cipriani style.

Football In brief

Scottish Premiership

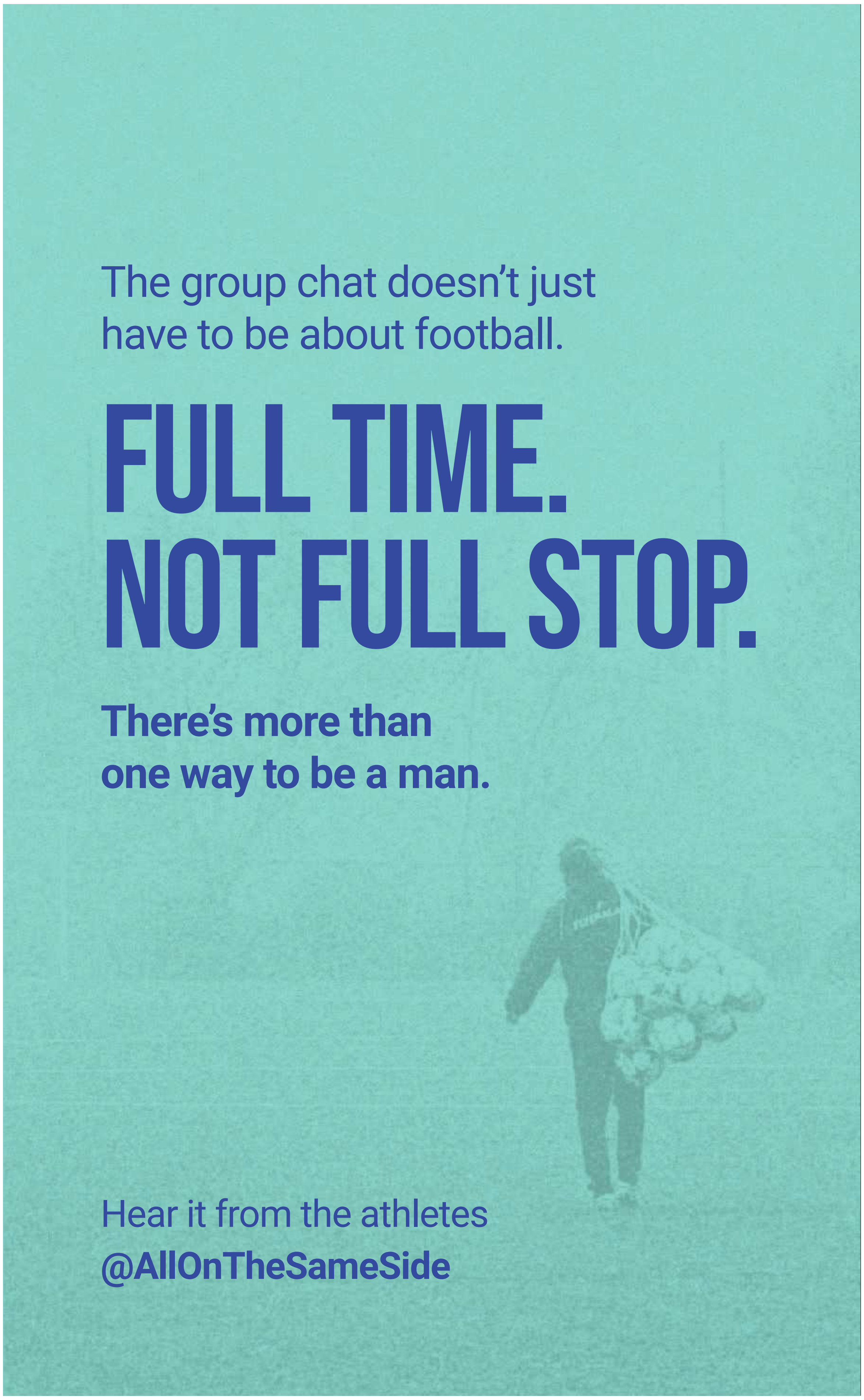
St Johnstone hit back to win seven-goal thriller

St Johnstone edged a seven-goal thriller against Kilmarnock on their return to the Premiership. Last season's Championship winners took the lead through Josh Fowler. Kilmarnock equalised with a close-range strike from Greg Kiltie. Two minutes into the second half, St Johnstone were back in front through Cheick Diabate only to see Kilmarnock equalise through Joe Hugill. Jason Holt's own-goal then put Neil McCann's side's 3-2 in front. The hosts kept going, however, and got back level via a Michael Schjønning-Larsen own goal and secured all three points through Kai Fotheringham's strike on 80 minutes. **PA Media**

Juventus

Kolo Muani rejoins Old Lady for up to £42m

Juventus have signed Randal Kolo Muani from Paris Saint-Germain for €38m (£32m) plus €12m in potential add-ons. The 27-year-old France forward, who has agreed a deal until 2031, scored 10 goals in a loan spell at Juve in 2025. On loan at Spurs last season he scored once in 30 Premier League games, plus four in the Champions League. **Reuters**


The group chat doesn't just have to be about football.
FULL TIME. NOT FULL STOP.
There's more than one way to be a man.
Hear it from the athletes
@AllOnTheSameSide

▼ *From back left: Mourinho, Klopp, Ferguson, Wenger, Guardiola. From front left: Iraola, Arteta, Maresca*
GETTY IMAGES/REUTERS

The big beasts no longer roam as battle begins to fill the void

Opportunity knocks in first Premier League season not to feature Ferguson, Wenger, Mourinho, Klopp or Guardiola

Jonathan Wilson

This used to be a land of giants. This used to be a land where big men fought. This used to be a land where Sir Alex Ferguson and Arsène Wenger tussled, then José Mourinho joined the fray. This used to be a land where Jürgen Klopp made Pep Guardiola reconsider, and he changed his style and won anyway.

Not any more. Next season will be the first since the inaugural Premier League in 1992 not to feature any of the five big managerial beasts - not Ferguson, not Wenger, not Mourinho, not Klopp and not Guardiola.

What's come over our great land? The Premier League is still our home, but where have all the heroes gone? Where's the man who ruled by fury? Or the man who made virtues of broccoli and sobriety? Where's the man who made the conference room the pitch? Where's the gegenpressingmeister, or the cold philosopher of the positional game? Now they take a man who instigated some interesting pressing patterns and they call him a regular hero. Where are the men who are willing to play the game?

You don't have to be a nostalgist in the vein of Bill Anderson to think that the Premier League looks a little diminished. Régis Le Bris took over at Sunderland two summers ago and already he is the fourth longest-serving manager currently at a Premier League club. While his quiet authority impressed last season, the understated Breton is no one's idea of a main character. And it'll take a while before the meeting of the two longest-servers, Mikel Arteta and Unai Emery, looks like a clash of the titans, even with the twist that Emery was Arteta's predecessor at Arsenal.

Tottenham appointed Roberto De Zerbi in March and, the promoted sides excepted, he has already been a Premier League manager longer than 11 of his rivals. All long-running dramas go through this process. Major characters move on, new ones arise. At least they are easier to tell apart than in House of the Dragon: they don't all have the same hair, and they are not all bafflingly interrelated. Still, it will take time for the new breed to become familiar. Quirks have to be learned, strengths and weaknesses understood.

The result is that this season looks as hard to call as any in living memory. Perhaps the Premier League has entered its Arsenal era and Arteta will soon squat like a giant toad across English football. But retaining the league is difficult, particularly given the emotional outpouring that inevitably comes with ending a lengthy drought. Neither Declan Rice nor Bukayo Saka looked especially fresh at the World Cup, while William Saliba damaged his back. It would be no great surprise if Arsenal started the season slowly.

▲ *Roberto De Zerbi (left) and Michael Carrick will be aiming for the top four*
CHLOE KNOTT/SHUTTERSTOCK; ASH DONELON/GETTY IMAGES

But who is equipped to take advantage? The previous two league title winners are under new management. Enzo Maresca - Guardiola's replacement at Manchester City - is a curious manager in that his record is rather better than the experience of watching his teams play. Although his reputation was enhanced by Chelsea's decline after his departure, it shouldn't be forgotten just how frustrated Leicester and Chelsea fans became at times with the cautious nature of his football. Arne Slot showed at Liverpool that it is, at least in the short term, possible to thrive when following one of the big beasts but it remains an enormous challenge to succeed somebody who has defined the personality of a club.

The modern calendar is so demanding that fatigue may end up being a bigger factor than any manager

Andoni Iraola impressed at Rayo Vallecano and Bournemouth, but the truth is that it's impossible to know how anybody will adapt to the greater scrutiny of a club such as Liverpool, no matter how composed they may previously have appeared.

There's a lingering doubt about his Bournemouth's propensity to concede late goals. It may be that a deeper bench offers an immediate solution but equally that could indicate a problem with load management - and that is not going to be made any easier by involvement in the Champions League. Iraola has always relied on extremely physical training sessions, but they will have to be tempered, at least to an extent, by the demands of European football, in which Iraola has little experience.

Similar questions can be asked of Michael Carrick at Manchester United. He did enough last season that United effectively had to appoint him, without doing enough to offer overwhelming proof of his abilities. Signings so far seem to have addressed the right areas in the squad, but the big issue is whether he can handle the demands of playing in multiple competitions. United finished third last season without ever playing a team who had played fewer matches than them.

So demanding is the modern calendar that fatigue may end up being a bigger factor than any manager. If you are a superclub, the key to having a bad season, as United have demonstrated, is to have one so bad that you don't qualify for any form of European competition.

Which is extremely good news for Chelsea. Not only do they have, in Xabi Alonso, one of Europe's most promising young managers but he has time to impose his ideas and his side will be fresher than their opponents in almost every game this season.

Emery's domination of the Europa League has paradoxically given him a reputation of not quite being of the highest tier, but if Aston Villa can find a way of winning games beyond Morgan Rogers thrashing long-range efforts into the top corner, he has a great opportunity to impose himself. De Zerbi, who has the charisma of a leading figure, should also find himself in the Champions League qualification shake-up given Tottenham's summer signings and their lack of European football.

The big beasts may have gone but that simply means the Premier League is entering a new phase. What matters now is the battle to be the next alpha. Arteta is perhaps best placed, but the contenders are legion. The land awaits its next giant.

Calvert-Lewin double seals fightback to reveal flaw Iraola must fix

Liverpool **2**
Chambers 7, Wirtz 40

Leeds **4**
Aaronson 60, Calvert-Lewin 71, 85, Longstaff 73

Andy Hunter
Soldier Field

After 45 minutes at Soldier Field the tale of Liverpool's pre-season tour of the US was of three straight wins and Andoni Iraola's ideas taking shape thanks in no small part to Florian Wirtz and Alexander Isak. After 90, with Liverpool's expensive duo off the scene, it centred on a stirring Leeds fightback and the recurrence of a fragility that Iraola could well do without.

Daniel Farke's team staged a convincing comeback to inflict a first defeat of pre-season on the new Liverpool head coach. Dominic Calvert-Lewin, twice, Brenden Aaronson and Sean Longstaff all scored in the space 25 minutes as Liverpool failed to deal with Leeds' strength at set-pieces and the disruption caused by a series of half-times changes. The drop-off from Liverpool, who led 2-0 at half-time, following the departures of Wirtz, Isak, Trey Nyoni and Rio Ngumoha was drastic.

"Why are there so many fans?" an incredulous Chicago police officer asked his colleague as the crowds descended on Soldier Field, a stadium as impressive in design and location as the skyline that towers behind it. More than 32,000 had been present the previous night to see Robert Lewandowski make his home debut for Chicago Fire. The lure of Liverpool and Leeds, even for a friendly, attracted an eye-catching 49,128 to the edge of Lake Michigan.

Wirtz and Isak had missed the midweek win over Wrexham in New York having started pre-season training only on Monday. Ring-rusty or not, they both brought an immediate improvement to Liverpool's performance level and displayed a rapport that will be crucial to realising Iraola's vision next season.

Isak looked sharper, more aware of his teammates and more involved in a Liverpool performance than he did during a first season hindered by fitness and injury problems. The Sweden international played all four of his country's games at the World Cup and, Liverpool will hope, may not need too much time to get back up to speed as a result. That appeared the case here.

It was Isak who instigated the counterattack that led to Liverpool winning a corner having weathered early set-piece pressure. Dominik Szoboszlai took it, Milos Kerkez deftly flicked it across the six-yard box and Luke Chambers lashed in the finishing touch. Isak also led Liverpool's pressing game with an aggression and relentlessness that augurs well.

Wirtz was involved in much of Liverpool's best work during his 45 minutes on the pitch. His instinctive link-up play with Isak and Ngumoha, who gave James Justin a torrid time at right back, caused Leeds frequent problems. Liverpool's second goal five minutes before the break was a delight. Nyoni, who has enjoyed a fine tour at the heart of Iraola's midfield, floated an inch-perfect cross into Jeremie Frimpong's run down the right. Frimpong hooked the ball back across goal first time and Wirtz stole in between three Leeds players to slide home. On the touchline Farke berated the officials over an offside call that went ignored in the buildup.

Nyoni, Ngumoha, Wirtz and Isak were replaced as planned at the interval by Ryan Gravenberch, making his first appearance under Iraola, Lewis Koumas, Federico Chiesa and Curtis Jones respectively. Farke also made four half-time changes and the introduction of Calvert-Lewin, the new signing Harry Wilson, Longstaff and Aaronson brought the necessary improvement. The contest was completely transformed.

The Leeds comeback commenced with a mistake by Kerkez. His over-elaborate back-heel was seized on by Ethan Ampadu, who released Aaronson in space on the left of the Liverpool penalty area. The USA international beat Giorgi Mamardashvili with a confident low finish. Calvert-Lewin levelled from close range after Joe Rodon flicked on a long throw from Ampadu and, just two minutes later, a third of Farke's half-time substitutes put Leeds ahead in slapstick fashion. Jones attempted to sweep away Aaronson's low cross into the Liverpool area and succeeded only in turning the ball against Longstaff. The Leeds midfielder looked sheepish after the rebound trickled beyond a stunned Mamardashvili.

Leeds were not done there. Worryingly for Iraola, his team were undone by an identical routine to Calvert-Lewin's first goal. Another Ampadu long throw, another flick on, this time by the commanding new recruit Tarik Muharemovic, and the former Everton striker inflicted more punishment on Liverpool by converting a towering header off the underside of the crossbar.

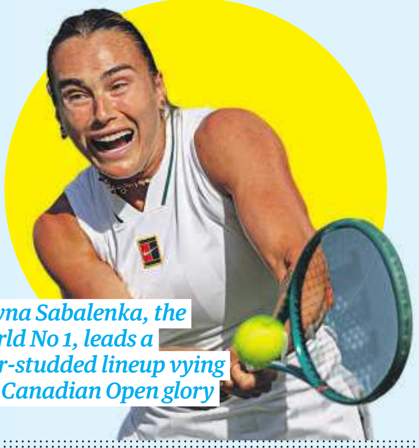
Liverpool
4-2-3-1
Mamardashvili; Frimpong (Scanlon 77), Ndukwe, Chambers (Ndiaye 69), Kerkez (Tsimikas 69); Szoboszlai (Elliott 68), Nyoni (Gravenberch ht); Morrison (Ramsay 68), Wirtz (Jones ht), Ngumoha (Koumas ht); Isak (Chiesa ht)

Leeds
3-4-3
Cairns; Justin (Lienou 83), Rodon, Muharemovic; Bogle (Gnonto 83), Ampadu, Tanaka● (Longstaff ht), Gudmundsson (Bornauw 35); James (Wilson ht), Nmecha (Calvert-Lewin ht), Stach (Aaronson● ht)

Referee Alexis da Silva (US) **Attendance** 49,128

▼ *Liverpool's Ifeanyi Ndukwe and Leeds's Lukas Nmecha fight it out*
DANIEL BARTEL/GETTY IMAGES

The week ahead



Aryna Sabalenka, the world No 1, leads a star-studded lineup vying for Canadian Open glory

Today

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Carabao Cup
Preliminary round York v Crawley (7.30pm) *Sky Sports+*
William Hill Scottish Premiership
Celtic v Dundee (7.30pm) *Sky Sports Football*
Cricket
The Hundred Women
Welsh Fire v Southern Brave, Sophia Gardens (3pm) *Sky Sports Cricket*
The Hundred Men
Welsh Fire v Southern Brave, Sophia Gardens (6.30pm) *SSC*
Tennis
Canadian Open
Montreal, Quebec (to 13 Aug)
National Bank Open
Toronto, Ontario (to 13 Aug)
Cycling
Tour de France Femmes
(to Sun)
Racing
Nottingham, Ripon, Windsor *Sky Sports Racing*

Tomorrow

Football (7pm unless stated)
Champions League
Third qualifying round: first leg: Ararat v Celje (5pm); Dinamo Zagreb v Kauno Zalgiris; Hapoel Be'er Sheva v Red Star Belgrade (6.30pm); Levski Sofia v Kairat (6.30pm); Mjällby v Slovan Bratislava (5pm); Olympiakos v NEC; Sparta Prague v Lyon; Union SG v Bodø/Glimt
Europa League
Third qualifying round: first leg: Larne v Iberia 1999 (8pm); Shamrock Rovers v Egnatia (8pm)
Conference League
Third qualifying round: first leg: Auda v Dinamo City (5pm)
Women's Champions League
Second qualifying round: Semi-finals: Breidablik v Aktobe (3pm); Dinamo-BGU v Servette Chênois (8am)
Cricket
Third Women's T20 International
Sri Lanka v Pakistan, Hambantota
The Hundred Women
Leeds v London Spirit, Headingley (3pm) *BBC Two/iPlayer/SSC*
The Hundred Men
Leeds v London Spirit, Headingley (6.30pm) *BBC Two/iPlayer/SSC*
Racing
Catterick, Ffos Las, Lingfield *SSR*

Wednesday

Football (7pm unless stated)
Champions League
Third qualifying round: first leg: AGF v Sabah (5.30pm); Fenerbahce v Sturm Graz
Europa League
Third qualifying round: first leg: Ferencvaros v Gornik (7.15pm)
Conference League
Third qualifying round: first leg: Brann v Apollon (6pm); Panathinaikos v CSKA Sofia (7.30pm)
Women's Champions League
Second qualifying round: Semi-final Ajax v Brøndby (2pm); Apollon Limassol v Czarni Sosnowiec (3pm); Austria Vienna v Hajduk Split (10am); Brann v Mitrovica (9am); E Frankfurt v Omonia Nicosia (6pm); Ferencvaros v PAOK (3.30pm); Gintra v Hearts (2.30pm); Hammarby v Apolonia (2.30pm); Juventus v Torreense (8pm); Kharkiv v Fenerbahce (noon); Køge v Riga (6pm); Mura v Farul Constanta (5pm); OH Leuven v Backa Topola; Racing v HJK (6pm); SFK v PSV (noon); Slavia Prague v Rangers (7.30pm); Sporting Lisbon v SeaSters (1.30pm); St Pölten v Young Boys (5pm); Vålerenga v Malmö (noon); Vllaznia v Spartak Myjava (7.30pm)
Cricket (11am unless stated)
First Men's One-Day International
Ireland v Afghanistan, Bready (10.45am)
The Hundred Women
Manchester v Welsh Fire, Old Trafford (11.30am) *SSC*; Trent v Birmingham, Trent Bridge (3pm) *BBC Two/SSC*
The Hundred Men
Manchester v Welsh Fire, Old Trafford (3pm) *SSC*; Trent v Birmingham, Trent Bridge (6.30pm) *BBC Two/SSC*
Metro Bank One Day Cup Men
Group A Surrey v Kent, The Kia Oval
Group B Hampshire v Glamorgan, Utilita Bowl
Racing
Brighton, Yarmouth, Kempton *RTV*, Pontefract

Thursday

Football (6pm unless stated)
Carabao League Cup
First round Bristol City v Walsall (7.45pm) *SS+*
Europa League
Third qualifying round: first leg: Benfica v Hearts (8pm); Hradec Kralove v Besiktas; Jagiellonia Bialystok v Rangers (5pm); KuPS v Universitatea Craiova (4pm); Lech Poznan v KÍ; Lincoln Red Imps v Omonia Nicosia (5pm); Maccabi Tel Aviv v CSKA Sofia (5pm); PAOK v Anderlecht (6.45pm); RB Salzburg v Pafos; Thun v Vikingur (7pm)
Conference League
Third qualifying round: first leg: Ajax v Shelbourne (7pm); Beitar Jerusalem v Austria Vienna (6.30pm); Bohemians v Midtjylland (7.45pm); Borac Banja Luka v ML Vitebsk (7.30pm); Braga v Dinamo Minsk (7.30pm); Cluj v Tromsø; Debrecen v Copenhagen; Dynamo Kyiv v Qarabag; Hapoel Tel Aviv v GKS Katowice (7pm); Hibernian v Shkendija (8pm); HJK v Motherwell (5pm); IFK Göteborg v Gent; Inter Club d'Escaldes v Flora; Inter Turku v Vaduz (4pm); Jablonec v RFS (5pm); Lugano v NSI (7.30pm); Noah v Sion (5pm); Paide v Rapid Vienna (5pm); Partizan v Tobol Kostanay (8pm); Rakow Czestochowa v Hammarby; Riga v Gyori ETO; Rijeka v Ilves (7.45pm); Sheriff v St Gallen; Tre Fiori v Drita (8pm); Twente v DAC 1904 (7pm); Zalgiris v Hajduk Split
Rugby league
Betfred Super League
St Helens v Hull FC (8pm) *SS+*
Cricket
The Hundred Women
London Spirit v MI London, Lord's (3pm) *SSC*
The Hundred Men
London Spirit v MI London, Lord's (6.30pm) *SSC*
Golf
Wyndham Championship
Greensboro, North Carolina (to Sun) *Sky Sports Golf*
PIF London Championship
(to Sun) *SSG*
Racing
Brighton, Chelmsford, Chepstow, Newmarket, Sandown

Friday

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Carabao Cup
First round Middlesbro' v Wrexham (8pm) *ITV1/SSF*; Wolves v Port Vale *SS+*; Wycombe v Stevenage *SS+*
William Hill Scottish Championship
Partick v Livingston (7.30pm) *BBC Scotland/iPlayer*
Rugby league (8pm unless stated)
Betfred Super League
Castleford v Hull KR (8pm) *SS+*; Leigh v York *SS+*; Wakefield v Leeds *SS+*
Cricket (11am unless stated)
Second Men's ODI
Ireland v Afghanistan, Bready (10.45am)
The Hundred Women
Birmingham v Leeds, Edgbaston (3pm) *SSC*
The Hundred Men
Birmingham v Leeds, Edgbaston (6.30pm) *SSC*
Metro Bank One Day Cup Men
Group A Lancashire v Gloucestershire, Old Trafford; Leicestershire v Warks, Grace Road (2pm); Nottinghamshire v Northants, Chesterfield; Somerset v Surrey, Taunton (2pm). **Gr B** Durham v Middlesex, Riverside (1.30pm); Glamorgan v Essex, Sophia Gardens; Sussex v Worcestershire, Hove (2pm); Yorkshire v Derbyshire, Scarborough
Snooker
China Open
Taiyuan (to 16 Aug)
Racing
Brighton, Haydock, Musselburgh, Newmarket, Thirsk

Saturday

Football (3pm unless stated)
Carabao Cup
First round (*SS+* unless stated) AFC Wimbledon v Newport; Barnsley v Wigan; Bradford v Rochdale; Bristol Rov v Peterborough Utd; Bromley v Reading; Burnley v Notts Co; Burton v Blackburn; Cambridge Utd v Barnet (1pm); Cardiff v Swindon; Cheltenham v Charlton (5.30pm); Colchester v Southampton (5.30pm) *SSF*; Crewe v Accrington; Derby v Lincoln; Fleetwood v Chesterfield; Gillingham v Luton; Grimsby v Blackpool; Leicester v Northampton; Leyton Orient v Oxford Utd; Norwich v MK Dons; Preston v Huddersfield; QPR v Millwall (2pm); Rotherham v West Brom (5.30pm); Salford v Shrewsbury; Sheff Wed v Bolton; Stockport v Doncaster; Stoke v Oldham; Swansea v Birmingham; Watford v York or Crawley; West Ham v Portsmouth
Enterprise National League
(all *Dazn*) Altrincham v Southend; Boreham Wood v Tamworth; Boston v Aldershot; Carlisle v Worthing; Eastleigh v Gateshead; Forest Green v Halifax; Fylde v Wealdstone; Harrogate v Solihull Moors; Hartlepool v Barrow; Hornchurch v Kidderminster; Scunthorpe v Yeovil; Woking v Sutton
William Hill Scottish Premiership
Dundee v Aberdeen; St Mirren v St Johnstone
William Hill Scottish Championship
Arbroath v Inverness; Dunfermline v Ayr; Queen's Park v Raith; Stenhousemuir v Greenock Morton
William Hill Scottish League One
Airdrieonians v East Kilbride; East Fife v Cove; Hamilton v Alloa; Queen of the South v Peterhead; Ross v Montrose
William Hill Scottish League Two
Dumbarton v Clyde; Elgin v Forfar; Kelty v Stirling; Stranraer v Annan; The Spartans v Edinburgh City
Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Bradford v Warrington (3pm) *SS+*; Wigan v Toulouse (5.30pm) *SS+*
Cricket
The Hundred Women
MI London v Trent, The Oval (11am) *SSC*; Southern Brave v Manchester, Utilita Bowl (2.30pm) *SSC*
The Hundred Men
MI London v Trent, The Oval (2.30pm) *SSC*; Southern Brave v Manchester, Utilita Bowl (6pm) *SSC*
Racing
Ascot, Ayr, Haydock, Lingfield *SSR*, Newmarket, Redcar

Sunday

Football (3pm unless stated)
Carabao League Cup
First round Mansfield v Sheff Utd (4pm) *SSF*
William Hill Scottish Premiership
Hearts v Dundee Utd (3pm); Kilmarnock v Celtic (1.30pm) *SSF*; Motherwell v Falkirk; Rangers v Hibernian (4pm) *Premier Sports*
Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Huddersfield v Catalans (3pm) *SS+*
Cricket (11am unless stated)
The Hundred Women
London Spirit v Birmingham, Lord's (2.30pm) *BBC Two/iPlayer/SSC*; Leeds v Welsh, Headingley *SSC*
The Hundred Men
London Spirit v Birmingham, Lord's (6pm) *BBC Two/iPlayer/SSC*; Leeds v Welsh, Headingley (2.30pm) *SSC*
Metro Bank One Day Cup Men
Group A Gloucestershire v Notts, Cheltenham (11am); Kent v Leicestershire, Beckenham (11am); Northants v Somerset, Northampton (11am); Warks v Lancashire, Rugby (11am) **Group B** Derbyshire v Middx, Derby (11am); Durham v Essex, Darlington (11am); Glamorgan v Worcestershire, Sophia Gardens (11am); Sussex v Hants, Hove (11am)
Men's Cricket World Cup League 2
Scotland v UAE, Dundee (11am)
Athletics
European Outdoor Championships
Birmingham (to 16 Aug)
Racing
Chepstow, Leicester

Moment Kuwaki made her name

Shiho Kuwaki soaks up the applause after winning the Women's Open at her second attempt
PETER BYRNE/PA

Kuwaki pulls off unlikely win to leave Henseleit cursing cruel misfortune

Ewan Murray
Royal Lytham & St Annes

It was no surprise that an extraordinary Sunday at the Women's Open ended in such circumstances. Has the ankle of a marshal ever before played a crucial role in the outcome of a major championship? A competition that looked for so long as if no one wanted to win rumbled on at Royal Lytham & St Annes until fate played its hand.

Glory for Shiho Kuwaki, pain for Esther Henseleit. That barely explains the half of it. Henseleit had forced a playoff with a stunning birdie from 45ft on the final hole of regulation play. On the first visit back to the 18th, Kuwaki played a glorious approach to secure her four and the extension of the tournament.

What happened next was beyond anyone's comprehension. Kuwaki found the fairway with a perfect drive. Henseleit cut her tee shot to the right, where it looked in enough bother before hitting the lower leg of a volunteer. The ball ricocheted to the bottom of a gorse bush. Henseleit did exceptionally well to advance the ball up the fairway but the clear advantage was with Kuwaki. Her four secured the trophy. Henseleit has legitimate cause to bemoan horrible fortune.

Earlier, this was a tournament where the nerves associated with the pursuit of a major championship were writ large across the faces of those looking to win the Women's Open's 50th edition.

Esther Henseleit was beaten in the playoff

Kuwaki's is the most unlikely of triumphs. Perhaps her lack of experience in this domain actually helped the 23-year-old as those around her wilted. Kuwaki had played in only one Women's Open before, missing the cut at Royal Porthcawl last year. Lytham provided such a contrasting storyline and Japan now has back-to-back Women's Open victories.

Henseleit needed a birdie three at the last to halt Kuwaki. She sat 45ft from the hole in two, with the odds firmly against her. The ball was 5ft from the hole when Henseleit knew its destination. Kuwaki surely feared the worst but need not have worried.

Henseleit earlier offered a snapshot of what played out on this major Sunday. The German tied Kuwaki's minus five with a tap-in birdie at the 15th. From the very next tee, Henseleit hooked a three wood into long grass. A bogey ensued. It was as if anyone who earned a proper view of the Women's Open trophy was immediately blinded by the light.

Yealimi Noh held a three-shot lead after 54 holes. She even increased that advantage by one before wobbles started at the 4th. Noh posted a 74 before admitting it "stung" to fall short in this manner. She was one shy of the playoff mark of five under.

On the final hole, in the final group, Henseleit and Noh had the opportunity to force Kuwaki into extra time. Both missed the fairway, with approaches leaving only the remote chances of birdies. Noh left her attempt short, moments after her playing partner had stunned the crowd.

Ryu Hae-ran, seeking a third major win in as many starts, carded a three over par 74. Jeeno Thitikul? 73. Nelly Korda closed in the manner of a world No 1 with a 68 - the lowest round among the top 13 names on the leaderboard - catapulting her into a share of fourth.

Charley Hull and Lottie Woad never seriously looked like delivering a British winner for the third time in a row at Lytham. Hull's 72 left her at minus one. Woad's putter was colder than a winter's morning in Siberia during her 73, which meant the same aggregate. Neither undertook media duties, which given their standing here was less than impressive. Tied sixth is hardly the stuff of disaster.

Anna Nordqvist signed off with a 68 before admitting the stresses and strains associated with her European Solheim Cup captaincy. Nordqvist will name her four captain's selections today for the clash against the United States, which takes place in the Netherlands in September. Intrigue surrounds whether Ireland's Leona Maguire will keep her place in team Europe despite indifferent form. Nordqvist made some calls to players during Women's Open week, which she conceded affected her own performance at Lytham.

"I think it's hard to put it in words how hard it has been," Nordqvist said. "I felt like as soon as I came off the course, it was just so much stuff about Solheim Cup, which has been hard because I really wanted to go and enjoy this week.

"I felt really off the first day but managed to battle through. I played really well the second day and then yesterday, I didn't really play that badly, but mentally I was just exhausted. I think it [the size of the job] has been a lot more than I expected. Maybe looking back, it was going to be a tough task to do both [play and be a captain], but I'm very proud of myself for how I've done it."

Leaderboard

−5	**Shiho Kuwaki** *Jpn*	*66 70 73 70*
−5	**Esther Henseleit** *Ger*	*73 69 67 70*
−4	**Yealimi Noh** *US*	*67 70 69 74*
−2	**Nelly Korda** *US*	*73 68 73 68*
	Atthaya Thitikul *Tha*	*64 73 72 73*
−1	**Hae-Ran Ryu** *Kor*	*66 69 74 74*
	Shannon Tan *Sin*	*69 74 71 69*
	Lottie Woad *Eng*	*69 71 70 73*
	Wei Ling Hsu *Tai*	*71 74 69 69*
	Rio Takeda *Jpn*	*69 73 72 69*
	Charley Hull *Eng*	*69 71 71 72*

Wiebes sprints clear for back-to-back stage wins at Tour de France Femmes

Lorena Wiebes leads the Tour after winning the opening two stages

Jeremy Whittle
Geneva

The Dutch sprinter Lorena Wiebes took her second win in this year's Tour de France Femmes in Geneva, further extending her overall lead in the nine-day race. Wiebes is proving untouchable in the sprint finishes and her turn of speed in the final 250 metres, on the lakeside finish of the Quai du Mont-Blanc, reduced her rivals to onlookers.

Lone breakaway Riejanne Markus had led by more than half a minute on the flat approach to Geneva and maintained that advantage into the final 5km, even with the whole peloton giving chase. But as the kilometres clicked down, the peloton clawed its way back, eclipsing Markus in the last 500 metres, before Wiebes made her inevitable surge to take yet another sprint win.

"The girls were chasing full gas to bring back Riejanne," Wiebes said of her teammates. "It's even more beautiful to finish it off in yellow." She now leads the Tour overall by 14 seconds from Kim Le Court and by 16 seconds from the 2023 winner, Demi Vollering.

Despite her success in the Femmes, Wiebes remains set to sue the UCI over her disqualification from the women's Giro in May when, after she won the opening stage, her bike was ruled underweight and she was stripped of the race leader's pink jersey.

There is no indication that either Wiebes or her SD Worx Protime team intend to back down from their threat of legal action over what they consider to be a flawed weighing process, conducted in a gusting wind.

After her stage win in Lausanne on the opening day, Wiebes' team manager, Erwin Janssen, made sure there was no repeat of the Giro debacle.

"I wanted to see how it all worked, how they actually did it," he told the media at the start of stage two in Aigle. "I took some videos of the process. There was a four-person jury, and the whole setup was fairly enclosed. It took place in a tent, so there was no wind, and the installation looked solid. One of the four was someone who had handled the weigh-ins at the Giro. I think even he was feeling a bit nervous."

Wiebes' bike, Janssen said, came in within the rules at "a solid seven kilos". "I could really sense a certain tension among the jury. I got the impression they were thinking, 'I hope everything goes smoothly.' Everything was recorded, and then you get a brief report," he said. "If you agree with it, you have to sign it."

But Janssen said that neither he nor any of his staff had signed paperwork at the Giro. "Our lawyers are currently exchanging questions with the other side, including questions about the procedure. We've received answers, but they're too vague. There will be further developments on that front in the coming months."

Janssen insisted that Wiebes was "unfairly expelled from the Giro" and that the Tour de France leader suffered both financial and reputational losses. "The stakes are incredibly high. Lorena could have secured three, perhaps even four, [stage] victories there. We are looking into whether we can be compensated for this. We have sponsorship contracts stipulating financial bonuses for achieving specific results - bonuses we missed out on because of this incident."

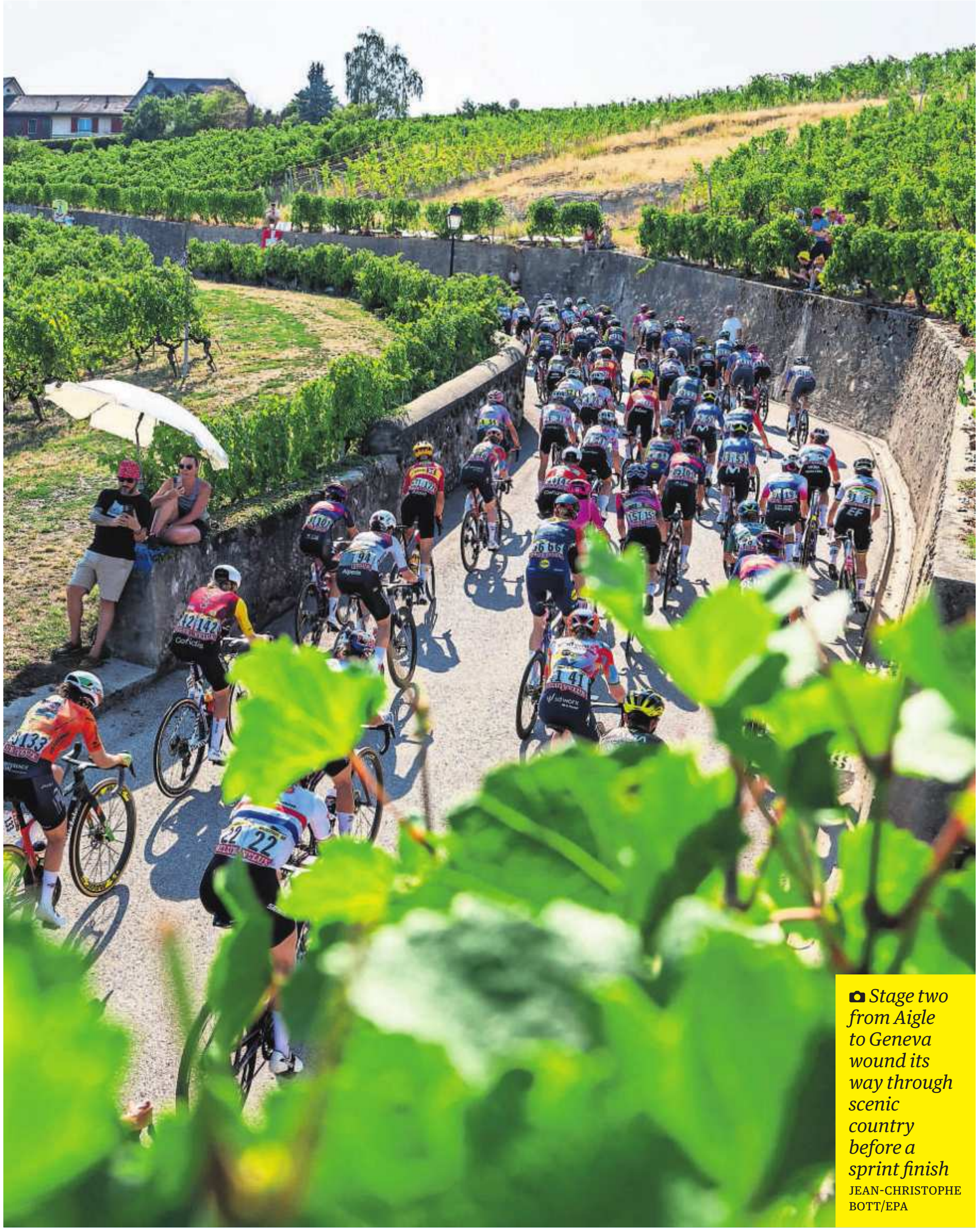
Janssen insisted that the issue will be resolved, but through "a court case or arbitration" and added that "we expect that to happen".

The UCI president, David Lappartient, however, was defiant when he was asked if the sport's governing body was prepared for a suit from Wiebes and her team. "We have very good relationships with the teams," he said, "but you can't be friends with everybody, otherwise we'd never decide anything.

"Sometimes we take decisions that are not 100% supported, but that's the reality about anything in the world. We have some tensions with some teams, but even if we have tensions, we keep the dialogue. It's not a personal conflict."

Wiebes is thought unlikely to make it a hat-trick of wins on the hilly third stage today, through the Jura to Poligny, even if her improved climbing still makes her an outside bet. The first-category climb of the Col de la Faucille, however, after just 24km of the stage, followed by three more categorised climbs, may well make a third success beyond her.

The defending champion, Pauline Ferrand-Prévot, has so far been a discreet presence. Currently ninth overall, the Olympic gold medallist is awaiting Tuesday's individual time trial and the bigger climbs of the final weekend. "As soon as we knew there was a time trial, we made sure to put me in a better position on the time-trial bike, and do quite a few aerodynamic tests," Ferrand-Prévot said. "I've spent a lot of time on the time-trial bike these last months. So I will try to give my best and to limit the damage on the fourth stage."



Stage two from Aigle to Geneva wound its way through scenic country before a sprint finish
JEAN-CHRISTOPHE BOTT/EPA

▲ *David Lappartient is in favour of selective nocturnal drugs tests*

UCI chief backs night testing in 'exceptional cases' at races

Jeremy Whittle
Geneva

The UCI president, David Lappartient, has said there will "always be suspicion in cycling" and insisted this year's men's Tour de France was clean. Lappartient, speaking at the start of stage two of the Tour de France Femmes in Aigle, also said he supported night-time testing during races in "exceptional cases".

Tadej Pogacar, the five-time champion, and his rival Jonas Vingegaard were subjected to night-time tests, at 5am and 2am respectively, by the International Testing Agency (ITA) midway through this year's race. "We will not support something they do every night on the riders. The normal hours are not in the night," said the head of cycling's governing body.

"However, we support the ITA if they have to do some specific test, because we know that, with microdosing EPO, that's something you can't detect six or seven hours after. So, for the riders to know that the ITA may come, that's always a fear.

"We always have suspicion in cycling, due to our past. I know what has been done to fight against doping. Night testing is a tool in this fight, but it is not a tool to use every day. You must use it very exceptionally. It's not suspicion about any rider, but it's a global message to the bunch."

Lappartient is an International Olympic Committee member alongside the besieged Fifa president, Gianni Infantino, and was re-elected UCI president unopposed for a third term in September last year. He believes involving stakeholders is key to successful reform of sports governance. "I will not interfere in Fifa's matters, but I can tell you that in the UCI transparency is important," Lappartient said.

"When we want to make a reform of professional cycling, we will first make a presentation to the teams, the riders and the organisers.

"I will not give advice to Fifa, but I think it's important to work with this kind of transparency."

Finucane wins keirin and record fourth track gold medal

Sean Ingle
Glasgow

▶ *Emma Finucane dips at the line for keirin victory, becoming the first sprint cyclist to win four gold medals at a single Commonwealth Games*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

The Welsh cyclist Emma Finucane wrote her name into the history books on the final day of the Commonwealth Games, but Glasgow 2026 will be remembered most for Australia's dominance.

Before the Games, the Australia swimmer Sam Short had told reporters: "I'm so pumped - I can't wait to go over there and smash those Pommies up." And the whole Australia team seemed to get the memo as they finished with 171 medals, of them 70 gold. That put them 61 clear of England, who won 110 medals, with Canada third on 62.

However Finucane will certainly go down as one of the athletes of the Games after becoming the first sprint cyclist to win four track gold medals at the same Commonwealth Games.

The Welsh cyclist added to the golds she had already won in the team and individual sprints and 1,000m time trial, with a bravuro victory in the keirin.

Finucane, who won Olympic gold as part of the Great Britain sprint team at Paris 2024, moved to the front with two laps to go, daring others to get past her. None of them could as she won by half a bike length ahead of the Olympic champion, Ellesse Andrews of New Zealand.

"I was convinced they would come round me," admitted Finucane. "Honestly it is hard to put into words. I could have easily gone out in the semis.

"After Paris, everything was a huge learning curve for me emotionally," she added. "That week was really tough, and what I came away with was hard to process. But going into these Games I've learned to handle pressure better and regulate my emotions more."

Finucane now plans to take a holiday with her sister before shifting her focus towards the track world championships in Shanghai in October.

"I definitely did feel the pressure but throughout the week I just rode my own race," she added. "The team sprint was a big aim. The last time we rode it was four years ago and we got a bronze medal.

"To come back as the same team and win gold was iconic. Singing on the podium with the team was insane. I just rode each race as it came. I went out there and left everything on the track. To stand here and have four golds, I have no words.

She added: "I don't think I'll ever believe that I've made history here. I can't believe little me has done this. Ten-year-old Emma is screaming inside, like, 'What is going on?' I hope I've inspired the nation to get on to a bike and get into a velodrome. I can't believe I found this sport and this sport found me."

Earlier on the last day, Leigh Hoffman became the first Australian cyclist to win four medals at one Games by winning the 1km men's time trial, ensuring he took home three gold and one silver. And there was more success for Australia in the para bowls as 76-year-old Louise Hoskins became the oldest athlete to win gold in Glasgow.

Hoskins and her partner Serena Bonnell secured a 6-3, 4-4 win, leaving Hoskins delighted. "It is incredible. I'm still pinching myself," she said. "I never thought I'd ever get gold at my age. Get out there and have a go, and never give up."

Elsewhere Jamaica fell short of pulling off another epic Commonwealth Games upset as they went down 56-48 to New Zealand in the women's netball final. However England missed out on bronze after being thrashed 68-50 by Australia, who recovered from a shock one-point defeat to Jamaica on Saturday.

"Fourth place is agonising," admitted captain Fran Williams. "It's the position nobody really wants to finish in when you're just outside the medals. We just weren't clinical enough today, and credit has to go to the Diamonds.

"Australia managed to show up stronger than us on the day it mattered most. It hurts at the moment, but there are so many lessons to take from this experience."

At least England were able to win three more gold medals on the final day. Emma Reid successfully defended her women's 78kg judo title, Katherine Rednall triumphed in the women's bowls singles final and Matthew Robertson defeated home favourite Fin Graham in the velodrome to win the C1-C3 3,000m individual pursuit.

Medal table

		●	●	●	Total
1	**Australia**	70	45	56	**171**
2	**England**	29	45	36	**110**
3	**Canada**	19	20	23	**62**
4	**India**	13	17	9	**39**
5	**Scotland**	13	9	17	**39**
6	**New Zealand**	10	14	12	**36**
7	**Nigeria**	10	7	7	**24**
8	**Jamaica**	10	4	5	**19**
9	**Wales**	9	10	12	**31**
10	**Malaysia**	8	3	5	**16**
11	**South Africa**	7	11	10	**28**
12	**N Ireland**	3	4	9	**16**
13	**Kenya**	3	4	5	**12**
14	**Cyprus**	1	5	6	**12**
15	**Mauritius**	1	2	1	**4**
16	**Cameroon**	1	1	3	**5**
17=	**Jersey**	1	1	0	**2**
	Samoa	1	1	0	**2**
	Sri Lanka	1	1	0	**2**

Games moving with changing TV habits but athletes fear lack of interest

continued *from back page*

Summer McIntosh and the Olympic 100m champion Julien Alfred, along with limited visibility on TV and the lack of sell-out crowds. However Katie Sadleir, the chief executive of Commonwealth Sport, said she shared Batty's positive assessment.

"These Games have absolutely exceeded my expectations," she said. "People are talking about it on the streets. I've met with athletes. I've met with Commonwealth Games Associations and everyone is going away buzzed about what happened."

Organisers said that the projected spend for the event was £162.6m - a fraction of the £543m spent at Glasgow 2014 and the £680m on Birmingham in 2022. They pointed out that Glasgow had also benefited from £4.7m that had been spent on upgrades, including a new track and replacement pitch at Scotstoun Stadium and the upgrading of Tollcross International Swimming Centre. Organisers also released TV figures showing that 11.4 million people had watched in Australia on Channel 7 and close to four million in Canada on CBC. However, they did not say how many people had watched in Britain, either live on TNT/HBO Max, or through Five's highlights show.

TV audiences for the opening ceremony were reported to have peaked at about 800,000 on Channel 5, with a further 50,000 on TNT, well down on the five million that watched on the BBC in 2022. However Sadleir defended the decision to choose Warner Brothers Discovery after the BBC made an offer that was said to be a "fraction" of the WBD bid.

"The BBC has been a fantastic partner for a very long period in terms of the Commonwealth Games, and we are doing BBC Radio, so they are involved," she said. "But I look after the Commonwealth movement of 74 countries, and it is my responsibility to look globally in terms of viewership."

Some British athletes are concerned their medal-winning performances have not attracted the interest of previous Games because of the lack of BBC coverage. However Sadleir insisted many people were now streaming and not watching on linear TV. "We are so pleased with the WBD deal," she said. "The world is moving in terms of how people are consuming sport. I've been sitting in the stands with people watching the live sport and seeing them watching HBO Max with their four screens and they're streaming it.

"Linear is still very important, but where we're moving to is a much wider look and feel about how people are consuming the Games. And for £4.99 for 600 hours compared to 200 hours in Birmingham, we are very pleased with that relationship.

"We have a very young demographic that we are trying to attract. Those people aren't watching linear TV; they are streaming and watching it on their phones and devices."

Phil Batty, the Glasgow CEO, said the Games 'exceeded expectations'

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‘There’s a persona on the track. A lot chat … that’s not how I roll’

Josh Kerr on Commonwealth Games glory on home soil, his dedication to sport, the 1500m world record, and why he doesn’t want his rivals to know him too well

Sean Ingle
Glasgow

It was late on a crisp Glasgow night when Josh Kerr unlocked his hidden human side. Most of those who had roared themselves hoarse as he powered to Commonwealth gold had long gone. But after a few tears on the podium, Kerr spent more than half an hour posing for every selfie and signing every autograph.

It took quite some time, as the terminator on the track turned out to be a chatterbox off it. Although sometimes when he was asked for advice, Kerr couldn’t resist a flash of droll humour. “I was telling the kids to go to bed and telling the parents off,” he says, smiling.

Suddenly Kerr is even deeper in the moment, sharing how children kept showing him signs they had made for him, or telling him about their love of sport. The only request he turned down was for his Oakley sunglasses, explaining that he wore them when he broke the mile world record last month. “I wanted to be there until everyone went home,” Kerr says. “And, to be honest, if you drink coffee at 6pm, you’re up all night anyway.”

Kerr can attest to that. When we meet the following morning, he confides that he has only had 15 minutes’ sleep. Not that it stops him giving all sorts of insights on his training, his use of red light therapy, and why the 1500m world record will probably have to wait. So how much of the real Josh Kerr does the public see, I ask. “Probably not a crazy amount,” comes the reply. “As athletes, we get a lot of criticism, and I’m OK with it. But it’s not something I want to drag my family into. That’s why I have a hard time pulling all of the information from my life and sharing everything.”

And while Kerr does put training videos on social media, he concedes that he doesn’t want his rivals to know him too well. “There’s a persona that comes on the track,” he explains. “And if you were in that call room on Saturday you would have seen everyone’s personality come out. A lot of athletes were chatting and joking and doing their thing. All power to them, if that’s what makes them comfortable. It’s just not how I roll.”

Track and field’s iron man proved just as inscrutable when the mile race got under way on Saturday. With 500m to go he was boxed in and a fair way back. But then came a trademark display of muscular determination. There was a push, a surge, then an irresistible charge to victory.

Was Kerr ever worried? “No, I ran 3:42, man,” he says. “There’s not much you can do in a mile race that’s going to beat me. I’ve got great speed and I’m running in front of a home crowd. Jake Wightman was the only wild card. He’s an incredible athlete and can close very well. But I just couldn’t wrap my head around any other problem. There’s some fantastic 1500m guys now, and Timothy Cheruiyot and Cam Myers are both fantastic. But I feel like I’m on a different level at the moment.”

> ***‘There’s not much you can do in a mile race that’s going to beat me. I’m running with a home crowd’***

Kerr is so monastic that when he finally got to his hotel at midnight, he celebrated with physiotherapy from his mum, Jill, and a meal from his personal chef, Jameel Austin: and a grand total of two chips. “We just hung out for about an hour chatting,” says Kerr. “My buddy and videographer Joey Youden got a chippy for everyone. I ate Jameel’s food, but I did have a couple of chips.”

Sometimes you suspect that a Trappist might even flinch at Kerr’s austere approach. He lives with his wife, Larimar, and their dog, Presidente, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he trains at 1,626m (5,335ft) above sea level and is usually in bed by 8.30pm. “We don’t do a lot,” he admits. “We live in the mountains in Albuquerque. I get up, work hard and go to bed. I have a pretty hard stop at 5pm and my wife gets home around 5.30pm. And between then and when we go to bed, which is ridiculously early, we just try and switch off.”

So what else does he like doing apart from walking the dog? “I’m a little bit of an audiobook podcast guy,” he says. “I like the For The Love of Rugby podcast and some American sports ones. But we don’t go out all that often. And there’s not much of a nightlife scene.” Might breaking the world record make him more recognisable when he returns? “It’ll be interesting when we go home,” he says. “But it’s Albuquerque. They’re not really super into their track and field. But it’s nice.”

Kerr is more expansive, though, when asked how the best season of his career came about. Much of it is down to his team, led by his highly respected coach, Danny Mackey, which also includes a personal chef, nutritionist, physiotherapist, chiropractor, strength and conditioning experts, massage therapists and pacers. But Kerr also emphasises the changes he has made in 2026, including lying down from 2-4pm every day and using red light therapy.

His 10-mile run on a Thursday, which used to be at 6:40/mile pace, is now at 5:50 to six-minute pace, he explains. While on Sundays his easy 17-mile long run has been tweaked, so sometimes he does a three-mile tempo at the end or puts in six minutes of harder effort on three separate occasions. “We know what my body is capable of before it breaks, which is around 73 miles a week,” he says. “So there’s no more volume, just more quality. It doesn’t sound like a huge change, but we put in two strength runs in there which has just allowed for a little bit more longevity in the season.

“But, if you’re going to add training and load, then the recovery

▼ *Josh Kerr stormed to the Commonwealth Games mile title on Saturday night*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Josh Kerr's medal haul

	🟡	⚪	🟤	Total
Olympics	0	1	1	2
World Champs	1	0	0	1
World Champs (In)	2	0	0	2
Euro Champs (Jr)	1	0	0	1
Comm Games	1	0	0	1

> ***'World Athletics is doing a good job. But we need to push to get the best racing each other more'***

needs to be pulled from somewhere else. So that's why we committed to lying down every day from 2-4pm and then using the red light. And those two things have kept us in one piece."

Kerr likes to be in control, but when it comes to his training he defers to Mackey. "Danny is definitely the evil genius behind it all," he says. "We plan everything out and I just need to give him honest feedback. And if you can pull the ego out of your comments and concerns, and just go with the complete raw data, then it's going to help him 100%."

Kerr plays down talk that he could break Hicham El Guerrouj's world 1500m record of 3:26.00 in the coming weeks, suggesting instead that it will probably have to wait until 2027 as his body might not be able to go again after winning the world indoor title over 3,000m in March, and then breaking the world mile record and winning Commonwealth gold in the space of a fortnight.

"I'm not scared of losing this form," he says. "I will hold the 1500m world record in my career. I can say that with a full chest. But I'm not in a rush to do that. I think we are flying a little close to the sun at the moment, and so we need to make good decisions over the next few weeks. I can't imagine it'll be on the cards for this year."

I ask Kerr what running has taught him about life? After all, he was not a teenage prodigy, but has relentlessly pursued his dream until he became a world beater. "That is a good question," he says, pausing to think. "I'm just a normal guy. Look at my results from an early age. Look at my progression year on year.

"The big thing we always said while going through the age groups was no one remembers the Under-13 or Under-15 Scottish champion. Of course on race day we always wanted to win, but I always had a long-sighted goal for my whole career. But if you are determined enough, can stack enough training together, and stay away from injuries and stay smart, you can 100% do it."

The Guardian report of Kerr's gold medal race was the most read article on the entire website yesterday morning. But, as I tell Kerr, while the majority of comments praise his victory, there were some arguing it should have been on free-to-air on BBC One rather than on TNT. "I'm not someone that's going to sit here and complain about what we don't get and whatever," he says. "If we put performances together and the numbers are good, then we'll get our spot.

"We have to continue to show up and battle for our sport. But I think the sports that deserve to be on BBC One are on BBC One. It's just how it is. And we've got some work to do."

However Kerr does believe track and field is heading in the right direction and points to the $150,000 for each winner at the Ultimate Championships as a big step in the right direction. "How long has the cash prize been $70,000 to win the world championships?" he asks. "How long has the cash prize for the world record been $50,000? Thirty years? Forty years?

"World Athletics is doing a good job. But we need to keep pushing to get athletes racing each other more. However the biggest problem with the Diamond League is that you can't pay all the best sprinters - and the best middle-distance runners - to be in the same start line."

Kerr did his bit by signing up for Michael Johnson's Grand Slam Track. But he was left with a gaping hole in his pocket after it collapsed after only three events. "I don't care about me. I'm in a very lucky position," he says. "But there are athletes that didn't have sponsorships, or were working jobs, who won a hundred grand and it never came through the door."

Before I go, I ask Kerr about those tears on the podium. "There was a couple, yeah," he says, reluctantly. So what was he thinking? "When I spoke to the media, they were like: 'what's next: the 1500m world record?' But I just wanted to enjoy seeing the Scotland flag up there.

"In sport we just continually rush through. In 2023, when I had my first proper win in the world championships, life was just moving a hundred miles an hour. So I was telling myself: 'slow down, enjoy it, because we're not guaranteed tomorrow.'"

◀ *Josh Kerr outpaced Cameron Myers and Timothy Cheruiyot on the way to another major championship medal in Glasgow*
ALEC BROWN/ACTION PLUS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Results

Football

CARABAO CUP

Preliminary rd Tranmere 2 Rochdale 2 *(Rochdale 2-1 pens)*

WILLIAM HILL PREMIERSHIP

Aberdeen	(0) **2**	**Hearts**	(1) **1**
Mayo 90, Nisbet 90+5pen 18,513		McEntee 35	
Falkirk	(0) **0**	**St Mirren**	(1) **2**
7,058		Phillips 11 87	
Hibernian	(0) **1**	**Motherwell**	(1) **2**
Boyle 56pen 17,440		Fadinger 40pen, Said 85	
St Johnstone	(1) **4**	**Kilmarnock**	(1) **3**
Fowler 16, Diabate 47 Schjønning-Larsen 69og Fotheringham 80		Kiltie 37, Hugill 49 Holt 53og 5,733	
Played on Friday			
Dundee Utd	(1) **1**	**Rangers**	(0) **1**
Rose 38 13,465		Aasgaard 56	

WILLIAM HILL CHAMPIONSHIP

Ayr 2 Arbroath 0; Inverness CT 0 Dunfermline 0; Livingston 2 Queen's Park 0; Morton 0 Partick 1; Raith 1 Stenhousemuir 1

WILLIAM HILL LEAGUE ONE

Alloa 0 East Fife 0; Cove Rangers 0 Airdrieonians 0; East Kilbride 5 Queen of the South 1; Montrose 0 Hamilton 5; Peterhead 0 Ross County 1

WILLIAM HILL LEAGUE TWO

Annan 2 Spartans 4; Clyde 3 Stranraer 1; Edinburgh City 0 Elgin 5; Forfar 1 Kelty Hearts 0; Stirling 2 Dumbarton 0

SCOTTISH GAS SCOTTISH CUP

First preliminary round: Glenafton 0 Stonehaven 0 (aet; Stonehaven won 3-2 on pens); Hawick Royal Albert 1 Penicuik 2 (aet); Shortlees 2 Dundee North End 3 (aet); St Andrews 1 Jeanfield 0; Whitletts 1 Sauchie 0

Commonwealth Games

ATHLETICS

Men's Triple Jump: 1 J Scott (Jam) 16.72; **2** P Chithravel (Ind) 16.58; **3** S Thirumaran (Ind) 16.52

Women's 10,000m Race Walk: 1 J Montag (Aus) 42:13.40; **2** E McMillen (Aus) 42:39.87; **3** R Henderson (Aus) 43:27.46

Men's Discus: 1 M Denny (Aus) 67.73; **2** F Dacres (Jam) 65.10; **3** L Okoye (Eng) 64.45

Men's 400m: 1 S Ogazi (Ngr) 44.25; **2** J Richards (Tri) 44.82; **3** Z Nene (SA) 45.21

Women's 400m: 1 D Oakley (Jam) 50.21; **2** S Williams (Bar) 50.99; **3** E Onojuvwevwo (Ngr) 51.00

Men's Pole Vault: 1 K Marschall (Aus) 5.85; **2** K Rademeyer (SA) 5.70; **3** O Heard (Eng) 5.70

Women's Long Jump: 1 J Sawyers (Eng) 6.93; **2** R Usoro (Ngr) 6.87; **3** B Buschkuehl (Aus) 6.80

Women's Javelin: 1 M Little (Aus) 61.88; **2** T Moorby (NZ) 60.04; **3** I Jepkemboi (Ken) 57.85

Men's 5000m: 1 M Kipsang (Ken) 13:23.61; **2** K Robinson (Aus) 13:24.70; **3** G Singh (Ind) 13:24.95

Men's 4x100m Relay: 1 Australia 38.07; **2** Canada 38.11; **3** Nigeria 38.12

Women's 4x100m Relay: 1 Jamaica 42.65; **2** Canada 42.76; **3** Trinidad & Tobago 43.07

Men's 800m: 1 N Anderson (Jam) 1:45.33; **2** L Boyes (Aus) 1:45.93; **3** W Kinyamal (Ken) 1:46.12

Men's One Mile: 1 J Kerr (Sco) 3:54.12; **2** C Myers (Aus) 3:55.26; **3** T Cheruiyot (Ken) 3:55.41

Mixed 4x400m: 1 Jamaica 3:10.97; **2** England 3:11.58; **3** Nigeria 3:12.85

Women's One Mile: 1 A Caldwell (Aus) 4:39.31; **2** J Hull (Aus) 4:39.86; **3** C Hollingsworth (Aus) 4:40.20

PARA ATHLETICS

Men's Shot Put F57: 1 S Rana (Ind) 13.40; **2** S Juyal (Ind) 13.28; **3** C Lekezo Azamdzi (Cmr) 12.57

Men's 1500m T54: 1 N Maguire (Eng) 3:17.65; **2** D Sidbury (Eng) 3:18.31; **3** S Rizzo (Aus) 3:18.61

Women's 200m T38: 1 R Clarke (Aus) 26.92; **2** S Hahn (Eng) 27.53; **3** B Brittain (Aus) 27.66

Women's 400m T54: 1 M Woods (Sco) 56.43; **2** N Alphonso (Mri) 57.89; **3** J Lewis (Ber) 59.31

BOWLS

Men's Pairs: 1 A McKeown & G Kelly (NI); **2** N Brett & J Walker (Eng); **3** A Abdul Rahim & M Rusli (Mal)

Women's Singles: 1 K Rednall (Eng); **2** A Merrien (Grn); **3** S Wilson (Nfk)

PARA BOWLS

Men's Pairs B6-B8: 1 D Delgado & J Reynolds (Aus); **2** K Smith & M Noble (NZ); **3** G Brown & S Sloan (Sco)

Women's Pairs B6-B8: 1 J O'Connell & T Blackbourn (NZ); **2** L Hoskins & S Bonnell (Aus); **3** N Daud & J Zakaria (Mal)

BOXING

Men's 55kg: 1 J Dixon (Aus); **2** J Mandengbam (Ind); **3** A Mohammed (Gha) & P Haoseb (Nam)

Men's 65kg: 1 P Mughalzai (Eng); **2** J Cassar (Aus); **3** P Khoahli (Les) & E Katema (Zam)

Men's 70kg: 1 J McConnell (NI); **2** O Holley-Sotomi (Wal); **3** M Clair (Mri) & S Kerr (Sco)

Men's 90kg: 1 I Okoh (Eng); **2** C Williams (Wal); **3** G McAllister (NI) & R McNulty (Sco)

Men's 60kg: 1 S Sachin (Ind); **2** T Ndevelo (Nam); **3** O Harris-Allan (Wal) & J Gallagher (NI)

Men's 80kg: 1 A Ankush (Ind); **2** D Shittu (Eng); **3** J Ofori (Can) & P Trainor (Aus)

Men's 90+kg: 1 D Thomas (Eng); **2** N Narender (Ind); **3** W McCarten (Sco) & N Paul (Tri)

Women's 54kg: 1 P Preeti (Ind); **2** S Delgado (Can); **3** L Mackie (Eng) & C Mwape (Zam)

Women's 57kg: 1 J Jaismine (Ind); **2** M Walsh (NI); **3** J Duamakanakana (Fij) & R Maselele (Les)

Women's 65kg: 1 S Hickey (Eng); **2** K Rock (NI); **3** C Rainey (Sco) & E Bryson (Aus)

Women's 51kg: 1 S Sakshi (Ind); **2** R White (Eng); **3** A Wall (Can) & M Aeres (Nam)

Women's 60kg: 1 P Priya (Ind); **2** M Al-Ahmadieh (Can); **3** Fatima Zahra (Pak) & L Kings-Wheatley (Eng)

Women's 70kg: 1 A Choudhary (Ind); **2** C Reid (Eng); **3** R Eccles (Wal) & L Pergoliti (Aus)

Women's 75kg: 1 E Greentree (Aus); **2** L Borgohain (Ind); **3** M Smith (Eng) & T Taafaki (Tuv)

JUDO

Men's 73kg: 1 E Nairne (Eng); **2** B Levy (Eng); **3** J Green (NI) & F Njie (Gam)

Men's 81kg: 1 A Bin Abdul Majeed (Mal); **2** T Meuwsen (SA); **3** K Ochi (Aus) & O Georgakis (Cyp)

Men's 90kg: 1 R Feuillet (Mri); **2** G Gaulin (Can); **3** J Petgrave (Eng) & S Cusack (Sco)

Men's 100kg: 1 K Reyes (Can); **2** M Gregory (Eng); **3** G Kroussaniotakis (Cyp) & F Tahman Zan (Cmr)

Men's +100kg: 1 G Antoniou (Cyp); **2** K Ozcicek-Takagi (Aus); **3** K Andrews (NZ) & P Monta (Ton)

Women's 63kg: 1 L Biron (Can); **2** S Middleton (Aus); **3** U Sharma (Ind) & E Ekutu (Ngr)

Women's 70kg: 1 K Petersen-Pollard (Eng); **2** A Coughlan (Aus); **3** K Yeats-Brown (Eng) & R Hawkes (NI)

Women's 78kg: 1 E Reid (Eng); **2** M Swan (Aus); **3** C Godbout (Can) & Z Michaelidou (Cyp)

Women's +78kg: 1 S Andrews (NZ); **2** R Soppi Mbella (Cmr); **3** K Hanna (Bah) & M Avaro (Gab)

NETBALL

Women: 1 New Zealand; **2** Jamaica; **3** Australia

CYCLING

Women's Tandem B 1000m TT: 1 E Foy & J Hodges (NZ) 1:06.367; **2** J Gallagher & J Mengler-Mohr(Aus) 1:06.852; **3** S Unwin & A Whitworth-Hay (Eng) 1:06.962

Women's 25km Points Race: 1 A Morris (Wal) 66; **2** J Roberts (Wal) 52; **3** G Baker (Aus) 51

Men's Tandem B Sprint: 1 N Fachie & A Pope (Sco); **2** J Ball & M Rotherham (Wal); **3** K Perris & L Zaccaria (Aus)

Women's 1000m TT: 1 E Finucane (Wal) 1:05.285; **2** A Marcks (Aus) 1:05.607; **3** E Andrews (NZ) 1:05.737

Men's 10km Scratch Race: 1 H Hobbs (Eng); **2** T Cornish (Aus); **3** E Vernon (Eng)

Men's 1000m TT: 1 L Hoffman (Aus) 58.530; **2** J Truman (Eng) 59.525; **3** T Ryan (Aus) 59.684

Women's Elimination Race: 1 A Polites (Aus); **2** G Baker (Aus); **3** M Coles-Lyster (Can)

Women's Keirin: 1 E Finucane (Wal); **2** E Andrews (NZ) +0.097; **3** K Clonan (Aus) +0.152

Men's 40km Points Race: 1 M Bostock (IoM) 83; **2** O Bleddyn (Aus) 80; **3** G Jackson (NZ) 61

PARA CYCLING

Men's C1-C3 3000m Individual Pursuit: 1 M Robertson (Eng) 3:22.597; **2** F Graham (Sco) 3:23.673; **3** D Briggs (NZ) 3:26.682

Women's C4-C5 1000m TT: 1 T Neyland (Aus) 1:08.761; **2** K Cox (Eng) 1:09.943; **3** E Normoyle (Aus) 1:13.542

Cricket

SECOND WOMEN'S T20 INTERNATIONAL

Dambulla Pakistan 175-5. Sri Lanka 178-4. Sri Lanka won by six wickets.

THE HUNDRED MEN

Trent Bridge Trent Rockets 146-4. SunRisers Leeds 141-4. Trent Rockets Men won by five runs.

The Kia Oval MI London 183. Manchester Super Giants 138. MI London won by 45 runs.

Edgbaston Birmingham Phoenix 137-9. Welsh Fire 138-3. Welsh Fire won by seven wickets.

Lord's London Spirit 105. Southern Brave 111-5. Southern Brave won by five wickets.

THE HUNDRED WOMEN

Trent Bridge Trent Rockets 139-7. SunRisers Leeds 134-5. Trent Rockets won by five runs.

The Kia Oval MI London 92. Manchester Super Giants 95-4. Manchester Super Giants won by six wickets.

Edgbaston Welsh Fire 144-3. Birmingham Phoenix 145-3. Birmingham Phoenix won by seven wickets.

Lord's London Spirit 114-8. Southern Brave 115-5. Southern Brave won by five wickets.

METRO BANK ONE DAY CUP MEN

Beckenham Nottinghamshire 293-9. Kent 294-5. Kent won by five wickets.

Leicester Leicestershire 289-8. Somerset 125. Leicestershire won by 164 runs.

Northampton Northamptonshire 347-6. Lancashire 280. Northamptonshire won by 67 runs

Rugby Gloucestershire 271-9. Warwickshire 277-4. Warwickshire won by six wickets.

Derby Derbyshire 325-7. Sussex 137. Derbyshire won by 188 runs.

Chelmsford Essex 376-5. Worcestershire 269. Essex won by 107 runs.

Utilita Bowl Hampshire 246. Durham 249-1. Durham won by nine wickets.

Lord's Middlesex 246. Yorkshire 211. Middlesex won by 35 runs.

METRO BANK ONE DAY CUP WOMEN LEAGUE TWO

Colwyn Bay Glamorgan 291-8. Northamptonshire 192. Glamorgan won by 99 runs.

Bristol Gloucestershire 196-6 Derbyshire 177. Gloucestershire won by 19 runs.

Arundel Sussex 248. Middlesex 249-8. Middlesex won by two wickets.

Redditch Worcestershire 296-8. Kent 297-2. Kent won by eight wickets.

Rugby league

BETFRED SUPER LEAGUE

Castleford 18 Warrington 48; Catalans 12 Wakefield 32; York 34 St Helens 32. **Friday** Hull KR 40 Bradford 16; Leeds 46 Toulouse 0; Leigh 8 Wigan 20

BETFRED CHAMPIONSHIP

Barrow 24 Rochdale 14; Dewsbury 20 Hunslet 30; Donc'ster 46 Oldham 18; Midlands 46 Keighley 6; North Wales 6 Goole 68; Sheffield 48 Halifax 16; Swinton 12 Batley 30; Widnes 36 London Broncos 42; Workington 16 Newcastle 40

Golf

WOMEN'S OPEN (Lytham St Annes)

Leading final scores (GB & Ire unless stated, Par 71): **279** S Kuwaki (Jpn) 66 70 73 70 (won at second p/o hole); E Henseleit (Ger) 73 69 67 70. **280** Y Noh (US) 67 70 69 74. **282** A Thitikul (Tha) 64 73 72 73; N Korda (US) 73 68 73 68. **283** C Hull 69 71 71 72; R Takeda (Jpn) 69 73 72 69; Hsu W-l (Tai) 71 74 69 69, L Woad 69 71 70 73, S Tan (Sin) 69 74 71 69, Ryu H-r (Kor) 66 69 74 74.

Greg Wood's racing tips

Ripon **2.24** The Mean Fiddler **2.54** Queen Sana **3.24** Zoustar Dreams (nb) **3.54** Dark Cloud Rising (nap) **4.24** Polygram **4.54** Vega's Virtue

Nottingham **2.40** Aura Champagne **3.10** Lola De Valence **3.40** Star People **4.10** Hurt You Never **4.40** Sedeirah **5.10** Venetian Lion

Windsor **6.00** Green Team **6.30** Decem Carolinae **7.00** Night Shining **7.30** Lahina Bay **8.00** Letsbeatsepsis **8.30** Benevente

The Guardian
Monday
3 August
2026

Sport

Women's Open
Kuwaki wins after Henseleit's unlucky break off marshal's leg

Page 38 →

Beast mode
Who will be the Premier League's next alpha manager?

Page 36 →

Infantino in peril
Uefa members prepare to oppose his Fifa re-election

Exclusive
Nick Ames
Matt Hughes

European countries are planning to increase the pressure on Gianni Infantino with a mass withdrawal of letters supporting his re-election as Fifa president.

Infantino's reign is in severe peril after the collapse of his privately backed scheme to sell off chunks of the World Cup, which was largely scuppered when Uefa member associations threatened to boycott future Fifa competitions. The mood remains febrile and there is a widespread appetite around Europe to ensure that he is quickly removed from his post.

Now a groundswell of national governing bodies are discussing the formal withdrawal of their support for Infantino in a bid to hasten his resignation, with announcements likely in the coming days. Before last week's crisis unfolded all of Uefa's 55 members apart from Germany, Romania and Norway had written letters to endorse Infantino's candidature next March, with a fourth term for the Swiss viewed as a fait accompli.

A simultaneous withdrawal has been mooted but there is also the possibility member associations could remove their backing one by one. Doing so would effectively amount to a vote of no confidence and increase the pressure on Infantino to resign. Fifa must be notified by any country wishing to recall their letter.

Discussions continue with countries in other confederations. Despite the failure of his Fifa Forward Enterprise proposal, a number of countries in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) publicly backed Infantino over the weekend. Sources within European football have questioned whether those federations have been made fully aware of the level of dissent facing Infantino.

After the financial powerhouse of Qatar backed Infantino on Saturday, smaller Asian associations Sri Lanka and Kuwait offered their public support yesterday. The AFC rarely votes en masse however, and it is possible that some associations unhappy with Infantino could rally to the European cause.

As the Guardian revealed in July, more than 200 of Fifa's 211 members have provided letters of endorsement for Infantino. Fifa is understood to have applied heavy pressure upon those wavering even though his tenure did not appear endangered at the time. Many backed him despite privately offering misgivings about his presidency but, in Europe and beyond, patience has run out.

Efforts to identify a candidate to replace Infantino are being stepped up. Anyone put forward for the election would require significant levels of support outside Europe, particularly from the AFC and the North and Central American and Caribbean confederation, Concacaf. Gathering quickly around a suitable contender could be key to persuading Infantino that his position is untenable.

Infantino appears determined to stay on, and is believed to be lobbying individual member associations across the globe to ensure he retains their support. Both the Confederation of African Football and the South American confederation, Conmebol, are fully behind Infantino however, leaving Asia and North America as the crucial battlegrounds as Uefa members seek a new leadership at Fifa.

Infantino is also facing a rebellion from members of the Fifa council who are attempting to force an extraordinary general meeting (EGM), which could develop into a leadership challenge. The Fifa council is the world governing body's main decision-making forum composed of 28 representatives of the six confederations, eight vice-presidents and Infantino. Under Fifa rules, a motion from 50% or 19 of the 37 council members can trigger an EGM.

Gianni Infantino faces growing opposition

"I'm on a different level at the moment
Josh Kerr on soaring to home gold glory

Exclusive interview *Page 42* →

TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

'Ready for the next 100 years': Glasgow 2026 chief hails Games revamp

Sean Ingle
Glasgow

This year's Commonwealth Games have been "phenomenal" and have shown the events have the potential to carry on for another 100 years, the chief executive of Glasgow 2026 has told the Guardian. Phil Batty also said that the revamped Games, which included only 10 sports rather than the 19 in Birmingham four years ago, showcased a formula that made them financially sustainable as they head to Amdavad in 2030.

"What a phenomenal 11 days," Batty said. "I have had absolute pride in the way that the city and the Commonwealth has come together. These Games have not only exceeded expectations. They have demonstrated that major events can flex and evolve to be fit for purpose in the future.

"What we've seen here in Glasgow is that you can put on an incredible Games, which is different but still feels as brilliant as it ever has been, and is ready for the next 100 years. And these Games have proved once and for all that the Commonwealth Games are relevant, the Commonwealth Games matter, and the Commonwealth Games are here to last."

There have been several criticisms about the Games, ranging from the long list of absentee stars – including Britain's 800m Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson, the Canadian swimmer

40 →

Water reform: hot, dry conditions make inequality starker *Editorials, page 2*
Iran brings the same ‘forever war’ risk as Afghanistan *Simon Tisdall, page 3*
Why I’d abolish fines on term-time holidays *Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett, page 4*

G2
Daily pullout life & arts section
Inside

The Guardian **Monday 3 August 2026**

Journal

Opinion and ideas

He’s a PM for the age. But being camera-ready isn’t enough

Nesrine Malik

Andy Burnham is having a good time. I can’t remember the last time a PM (or indeed any high-profile British politician) actually looked as though they were enjoying what they were doing. I saw a clip the other day in which Burnham remembered arguing with his dad about the point of an English degree, quoted poetry and discussed the importance of mastering words. It was almost enough to make you feel sorry for Keir Starmer. In his entire time as leader of Labour and then head of government, Starmer delivered not a single unprocessed moment. No natural sentiment escaped the carapace. And here is his successor, practically oozing it.

It matters. It’s good and healthy to have a leader who looks as though they want to be there. Whose approach isn’t that of a scold or a receiver who has taken control of the premises, or someone whose sole aim is to clamber up to the top job and hold on for dear life. I hadn’t fully realised, until Starmer cleared off, how much his premiership gave off the sense that the public were doing a bad job. That it was somehow their fault Starmer wasn’t as popular as he thought he should have been. As though it were the public’s job to deliver stable government and stop being so restive and fickle; to stop having feelings and opinions on your PM that show up in the polling. Poor Starmer, some said, smashed fatally against the rocks by the roiling, insentient electorate of an ungovernable country.

Burnham’s approach restores the principle, lost for so long, that you have to woo people and establish a connection. Over the past two weeks it looks as though it has been easier to get a reply from his X account than for business executives to establish contact with his team. The videos he is posting on social media are, by any measure, a remarkable departure from the old way of doing things. They collectively have a voice, an almost salesman-like pitch. They say “just hear me out”. If anything, Burnham’s posts on everything from the importance of learning practical skills to ranking pub snacks show how late British politics is to the game. My first sense of it all wasn’t of how revolutionary it was, but why on earth it took so long.

The answer, of course, is that no one had the taste for it. The personalities of our last few PMs were not, to put it mildly, those of digital natives. Their styles were “cop”, “sidekick bully” and “Liz Truss”, rather than public-facing politicians keen to communicate via the platforms they

Andy Burnham after winning the byelection in Makerfield, 19 June

PHOTOGRAPH: ADAM VAUGHAN/EPA

The Guardian
Founded 1821 Independently owned by the Scott Trust № 55,975
'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

2

He's a PM for the age. But being camera-ready isn't enough

Nesrine Malik

← *Continued from front*

actually use. Burnham's performances may sometimes be perilously close to shtick, but he has a flair and energy for the sort of modern direct-to-camera address that could give him an edge in a media environment where the parameters have for too long been set by an overwhelmingly rightwing traditional media.

Burnham knows all this. A little too much, perhaps. The bar is in hell and so is the discourse. It takes very little to break through the grim record of the past few years and outdo stale TV and radio formats. It would be easy enough to post some good, sharp stuff on your own social media and call it a day. And if it continues that way - that is, an approach to communication which does not tackle the positions that made the atmosphere so fetid in the first place - then it will all soon become background noise, and then an irritant.

Because digital political success is not just about being good on camera. Burnham's style has been compared with that of the obvious originator of the model, Zohran Mamdani. But Mamdani shows that having a flair for direct communication is only the first stage, the part where you get people on board. (His videos in different languages during the election campaign were gold.) You then have to keep at it, and show you are new in both style and practice. That you are a strong advocate for people. And, most importantly, that you are a cheerful, unflappable threat to their enemies. "When I ran for mayor, I said I was gonna tax the rich," Mamdani says, in a recent video. Then he comes up close, knocks the camera. "Well, today we're taxing the rich." His pied-à-terre tax, he told New Yorkers, will be levied on properties like the one he's standing under, a penthouse belonging to the hedge fund CEO Ken Griffin.

Burnham has already done some tangible good by starting out with policies focused on people's pockets - on bills and bus fares and VAT relief - and with an evocative drive to devolve power from London. He promises "a new political model and a new economic model". Them's fighting words. But his narrative lacks a clear articulation of what actually separates the needy from the predatory. Yes, at this point it is revolutionary just to name the problems, let alone do anything about them. But it will not be enough.

Burnham seems satisfied with figuring out what he can get away with without that epic fight; with gesturing to how bad Thatcherism and neoliberalism are but not actually slaying them. He won't want to target the under-taxed wealthy because he doesn't want to "create new divisions and pitch people one against another". He is willing to keep in place the previous regime's punitive immigration regime (while valorising the foreign workers who care for his father).

And while it's early days on foreign policy, things seem to be business as usual, suggesting Burnham has little appetite for resetting international relations in a period of historic flux. Even though he apologised for Labour's stance on Gaza, he continues the previous government's permission for the US to use some UK bases for strikes on Iran, and is entertaining, according to Donald Trump, friendly discussions on "North Sea Oil, Trade, the Military Alliance, Demining of the Hormuz Strait". There looks to be no reckoning afoot with the US's calamitous actions in the Middle East.

First you change the political culture, then you can change the model. That culture is style and presentation and some policy, yes, but to capture lightning in a bottle, you must show that intellectual and moral barriers are being redrawn. If there is any lesson to be gleaned from our age of short-lived PMs, it is that all ostensible advantages - landslides, huge polling leads, mandates to deliver Brexit - dissolve under the harsh light of insincerity born from timidity. Authenticity comes from congruence. Burnham might be able to get away with a lot of the effect and some of the substance for a while, but he will only be the revolutionary prime minister he promises he is - people will only *believe* that he is - if he breaks something other than the fourth wall.

Drought

Hot, dry conditions make inequality starker. Water reform is urgently needed

Compared with rising heat-related deaths, and devastating wildfires in the Cairngorms and Suffolk, the announcement that the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is considering moving its hydrangea collection from Surrey to Greater Manchester and North Yorkshire might seem unimportant. But it points to geographical differences in exposure to global heating that have arguably never been more evident than this summer, with last month the driest on record. Seven areas of south and east England are officially in drought, along with the whole of Wales.

A drought is less easily measured than a heatwave, which is declared by the Met Office when the maximum temperature exceeds a set threshold on three consecutive days. But the fact that drought is harder to quantify does not make it less damaging. Water shortages are exposing specific vulnerabilities and inequalities, as well as the UK's lack of preparedness for climate change overall.

Some of the unfairnesses revealed in recent weeks are shocking in their predictability. Exemptions that allow golf courses and schools with large sports grounds to water lawns, when councils and householders are banned from doing so, have led to justifiable anger. But while the insulation of elites from hardship is nothing new, the heightened impact of such patterns in extreme weather requires attention. Privileges such as guaranteed water for golf courses cannot survive a drought. People whose housing, jobs or health make them vulnerable must be shielded.

Andy Burnham has yet to set out his plans for greater public control of water companies. Nationalisation of Thames Water remains a welcome possibility. But it is vital that this industry's role in exacerbating scarcity and injustice is addressed. Its bosses and shareholders are not solely to blame. The decision to privatise the water industry was taken by a Conservative government, while regulators bear responsibility for chronically weak oversight, particularly of Thames Water, which has been staving off collapse for years. But the extraction of billions of pounds of profits by businesses set up as regional monopolies, while infrastructure including wastewater treatment and storage was neglected, and debts piled up, has been a disgraceful failure. Drought conditions reveal how dangerous this is, since when people are asked to make sacrifices, it is vital that they have a sense of shared responsibility towards a common good.

At least new reservoirs, which store water gathered in winter for use in the summer, are on the way. After three decades during which no major ones were added, the industry has pledged to build 10, with two in the dry east of England given priority status. But questions remain over the viability of plans to build thousands of new homes in drought-prone areas, and the difficulties faced by farmers, who want it to be made easier to build reservoirs specifically for use on their crops. Water recycling and conservation efforts are also far behind where they should be, with household water use in England and Wales among the highest in Europe.

With the climate in the south of England increasingly resembling that of the Mediterranean, those able to move may increasingly look north - following the RHS's hydrangeas. Global heating will reinforce old patterns of inequality, but it will also create new ones. Societies and governments must prepare for both. This summer's drought makes it clear how urgent this is.

United Nations

The US can boycott talks, but it cannot veto the world's new tax rules

Governments are told that public services must shrink because money is tight. Yet a new Tax Justice Network report says that countries could capture an extra $500bn a year without raising corporate tax rates. The answer is to tax multinational profits where real economic activity happens - known as unitary taxation. No new profit is created. Revenue simply shifts from tax havens where profits are "booked" to the countries where workers produce and customers spend.

Making that principle a global tax standard depends on UN talks opening in New York today. Modelled on the UN climate regime, a fiscal framework convention would create the governing body and procedures, with protocols providing detailed rules. The UN wants agreement by late 2027. Donald Trump's US walked out last year and urged others to follow. None did.

Rich countries gain most when firms pay tax where people work, not where profits vanish in havens, because their economies are the largest. Britain would collect about £13bn extra a year in tax receipts - two-thirds of the cost of an NHS-style social care system. EU governments could raise enough to quadruple climate-adaptation spending. Poorer countries also benefit. The report calculates that the global south would receive $156bn in one year - more than the International Monetary Fund has outstanding in loans to those nations.

For the first time in decades, multinationals could be taxed where they actually do business. Rules built for the corporate world of the 1920s - when national industrial giants dominated - would finally confront today's companies organised around intangible assets and global supply chains, as well as profits of an altogether different scale. In 1929, General Motors made the equivalent of $4.7bn. Apple's profit last year was $112bn. What the report calls "diversified" tax havens such as Switzerland and the Netherlands could offset losses by raising rates. Pure booking centres such as the Cayman Islands could not.

The talks suggest states are beginning to reclaim powers surrendered under globalisation to corporate lawyers and private tribunals. One protocol would let countries tax digital and other cross-border services without waiting for firms to establish domestic offices, blunting Mr Trump's trade threats. A second could go further, shifting tax disputes from secretive investor-state arbitration into a more open, publicly accountable UN-led system.

The direction is unmistakable. Ireland, which is facing an estimated $11bn annual tax loss, has already begun putting aside part of its "windfall corporate tax receipts" in a new fund - an admission that the revenue won't last. India and Nigeria have legislated so that companies profiting from their economies should not escape the tax net just because they operate across borders.

Britain has belatedly backed a UN-led shift towards taxing real activity. Defending rules entwined with its offshore network was politically indefensible and economically perverse. The US can sit out the negotiations, but it cannot shield American companies from others' rules. The success of these talks has largely been down to African nations insisting on consensus where possible and majority rule where necessary. That denies the US and any rich-country bloc an effective veto. Backed by India, Brazil and other developing powers, an African-led coalition can now press a simple claim: countries should be free to tax value created within their economies. Britain should help them prevail.

For Trump, Iran brings the same 'forever war' risk as Afghanistan

Simon Tisdall

It's five years this month since the chaotic retreat of US forces from Kabul. The Nato-backed invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, launched after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington DC, is now widely regarded as a failure. It cost the lives of more than 2,400 US and 450 British troops, and tens of thousands of civilians (the exact number is unknown). Although al-Qaida terrorists were routed, their Taliban hosts reimposed repressive, misogynistic Islamist rule after regaining power in 2021. Afghanistan became a byword for ill-considered western interventionism and nation-building. It was the archetypal "forever war", a phrase first coined during Vietnam.

If this cautionary tale had any lasting value, it was as a deterrent to politicians and generals tempted to rashly embark on open-ended conflicts without just cause, defined, achievable aims, and an exit strategy. Dismayingly, the lesson had to be learned all over again in Iraq, which the US and UK invaded in 2003 and departed, having caused huge harm for scant benefit, in 2011. "Never again!" was the passionate cry. And yet, it seems, the same disastrous pattern is now repeating after Donald Trump's incomprehensibly foolish decision to attack Iran. A war he termed a "little excursion" is entering its sixth month and has been escalating rapidly. It, too, has a "forever" feel.

That this nightmare is happening again defies all reason. How can it be? Immediate causes of the war aside, answers may be found in persistent US exaggerations and misconceptions about the level and extent of external threats, mixed up with political dishonesty, national hubris, naivety and misplaced idealism. Recalling the harrowing US experience in Afghanistan, Carter Malkasian, a National War College professor who served as a civilian adviser to US forces in Helmand and Kabul, suggests the basic premise for keeping troops in Afghanistan for 20 years - a belief the country would otherwise revert to being a safe haven for international terrorism - was fatally flawed.

"Nothing of the sort occurred. Over the past five years, not a single act of terrorism against the US was carried out by a group based in Afghanistan," Malkasian wrote. "Washington spent roughly $1tn on the war. More than 775,000 American service members were deployed ... all to defend against a threat that turned out to have been exaggerated. Five years on, the greatest danger is not that a terrorist safe haven might once again emerge in Afghanistan. A graver threat comes from the risk of collective forgetting." In short, "fears of the moment" should not cloud memories of the dreadful long-term costs - human, financial, geopolitical - of endless war.

If the Afghan war was prosecuted on the basis of a false assumption, so much more so was the invasion of oil-rich Iraq. George W Bush's claim in 2002 that Saddam Hussein's regime possessed stockpiles of readily usable chemical and biological weapons and was seeking a nuclear bomb proved untrue. Untrue, too, was the claim from the then vice-president, Dick Cheney, that Iraq "aids and protects" al-Qaida. The subsequent occupation and insurgency became part of an even larger forever war - Bush's "global war on terror". According to Brown University's Costs of War project, an estimated 940,000 people were killed in direct post-9/11 violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen and Pakistan between 2001 and 2023. Up to 3.8 million died indirectly in post-9/11 war zones.

> **"There is a recurring paradox here: it's the spectacle of the world's most powerful country once again fearfully tilting at shadows**

It's easy to second-guess decisions about war and peace taken under the pressure of horrific events. The disingenuous pursuit of political, military and commercial agendas, and the manipulation of intelligence and public opinion, is harder to excuse. Yet was any war ever launched without ulterior motives? The much-discussed film The Odyssey concerns the aftermath of the 10-year-long Trojan war, ostensibly triggered by the abduction of Helen of Sparta. Yet, prosaically, the war may have been more about fair trade than a fair maiden. The US maintained it fought the Vietnam war to halt the spread of communism - the discredited "domino theory". But it was also very much about US exceptionalism and global hegemony. In that sense, little has changed.

What else makes US politicians risk costly entanglements in foreign wars they usually lose? Fear is a common denominator. Like Bush before him, Trump and Israel's leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, have knowingly exaggerated the existential nature of the Iranian threat. Like Iraq in 2003, Iran has no nuclear weapons and there is zero firm evidence it has recently tried to acquire them. There is a recurring paradox here: it's the spectacle of the world's most powerful country once again fearfully tilting at shadows.

Trump's overbearing hostility to weaker US neighbours such as Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia, Panama and Greenland has a forever aspect, too. It is rooted in the foundational myth that the US has a right to oversee the western hemisphere, a view it later extended to the rest of the world. Likewise, greed is forever. Trump seeks to exercise economic as well as geopolitical dominance. He has tried to monetise the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. His focus on the strait of Hormuz shows how security policy and financial and commercial interests invariably intersect.

Lack of effective UN mediation, the hollowing out of US diplomacy, and a refusal to accept the militarily inevitable all play a role in turning US-led conflicts into quagmires. In Trump's case, it seems he would rather risk war crimes, set the Middle East ablaze and destroy Republicans' electoral chances than admit he was wrong over Iran. Such behaviour illuminates another pernicious aspect of the forever war phenomenon. Its utter pointlessness is fundamentally immoral. In its sheer un-reason, it offends against the laws of God and man. War without end is the death of hope.

As he twists and turns over Iran, it's plain that Trump perceives the bottomless pit on the edge of which, thanks to him, the US totters. One day, he talks about talks. The next, he hits out with massive violence. Careless of Iranians' suffering, implacable Tehran hardliners turn the screw, mounting widening regional militia attacks and global economy-spooking drone and missile strikes. Lost in a maze of denial, Trump tries to bomb his way out of trouble while desperate for a deal that can be sold as a victory.

Neither option is going to work. This abysmal Iranian catastrophe is already defining Donald Trump's presidency. The bloody stain, the blame and the shame, if not the war, will last forever.

Fleeing Afghans and allied soldiers at the Hamid Karzai airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, August 2021 PHOTOGRAPH: AKHTER GULFAM/EPA

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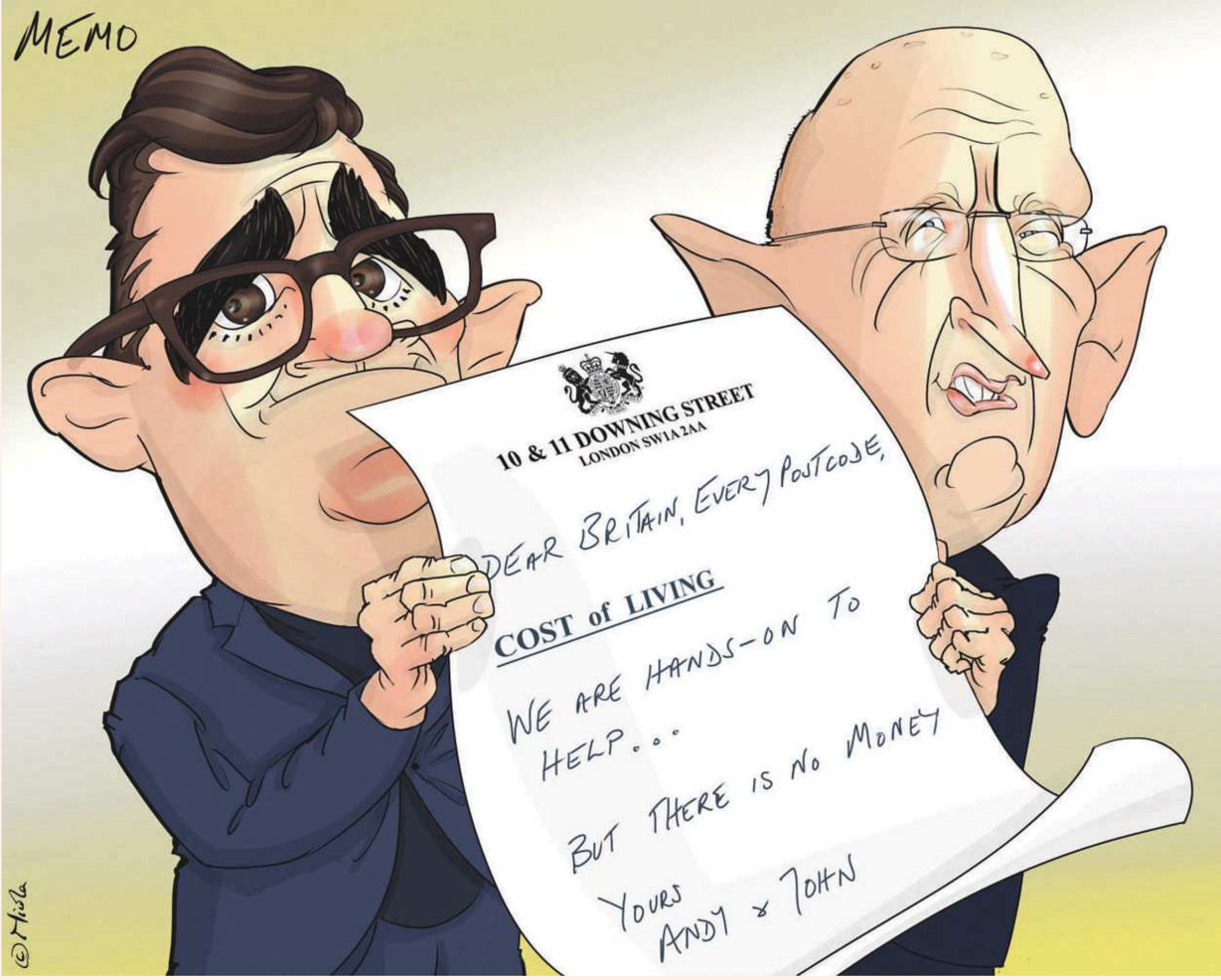
Simon Tisdall *is a foreign affairs commentator*



NICOLA JENNINGS

Why I'd abolish fines on term-time holidays

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett

Perhaps it's my stage of parenthood, or the fact that I've been lying awake at night, but I think I have an idea that could secure the electoral future of the Labour party. All that Andy Burnham needs to do to win a landslide at the next general election is abolish fines for parents who take their children on term-time holidays. More than 2 million – or about a fifth – have taken their children out of school because they could not afford to travel during holidays, according to a national survey released this month. A record 459,288 fines were issued to parents in England alone last year.

This issue has recently become relevant to me because my son starts school in September, so it will be the last year in which we will be allowed to take term-time trips. Obviously, as I contemplate the preposterous costs for summer holidays, I have developed a new and vested interest in being able to get away with my family. It's deeper than that, though: I didn't get many childhood holidays, for financial and circumstantial reasons. As a result I feel passionately that all small people need leisure time away.

Living in a wealthy middle-class area has further radicalised me. I have heard enough parents casually admit that they simply incorporate the fine into their budget to understand that a two-tier system exists. Fines for term-time holidays discriminate unfairly against low-income and Send families, who for the aforementioned financial and circumstantial reasons (too expensive, too crowded for children with sensory or mobility issues) will struggle to take their children away at peak times or cover the fines for doing so in term time. And the fines don't even work. Taking your child out of school for a holiday is an ongoing act of mass civil disobedience on the part of the public in England and Wales (Scotland and Northern Ireland do not have automatic fines). Considering how law-abiding we generally are, I find this extraordinary. It implies there is a significant proportion of the public who believe in the importance and the value of a family holiday to the extent that they are willing to break the law to give their kids one.

Of course, there are inevitably people who get very exercised about everyone following the rules. These objectors think you should simply plan your holidays around the school calendar, and if you can't afford to go anywhere, tough. I have met people in real life who have said this in conversation, and they are always the sort who take their children on gastronomic cycling tours of the Dordogne every summer. In other words, they have a certain level of privilege and don't seem able to make the imaginative leap to barely being able to scrape together enough cash for a few rainy days in a caravan near Prestatyn.

Don't get me wrong: there are reasonable objections to my proposition. School attendance and its impact on education is an important issue – I fundamentally believe that. What I don't believe is that schools should be such a high-pressure environment that one term-time holiday a year – which would still need to be authorised at the headteacher's discretion – will always have a disastrous impact on learning. With school refusals at record highs and a crumbling Send system, term-time holidays are clearly not the most urgent cause of poor educational outcomes.

If I've managed to convince you, perhaps I will risk losing you when I say that I don't believe these trips even necessarily need to be "educational". On the few holidays I was taken on, we went to museums and old workhouses and castles and ruins, and yes, it's beneficial to do that. It's also good for children to see the worried frowns on their parents' faces melt away – to socialise, to practise their swimming and eat new foods. Memories of fun and togetherness can last a lifetime, sustaining us through tough times. Value to taxpayers is often mentioned in these discussions, but the wellbeing and mental health benefits for children can be economic as well as holistic.

By all means, also look at other measures, such as penalising travel companies that engage in unreasonable profiteering, and staggering or shortening the summer holidays – and providing proper childcare during them. But this should be an open goal for Burnham. He says he cares about alleviating the cost of living pressures on families, allowing them to enjoy life. Abolishing fines would be one effective way of doing that, while correcting a source of social inequality. And it's a vote winner.

Letters

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Established 1906

Country diary

Garrigill, Cumbria

At first I can't believe that there's a way in, the entrance is so hidden by downy willow, ferns and field rush. Just a trickle of rusty water hints at the opening to an abandoned mine. That we have to push through scrub to enter the underground world only adds to the excitement.

A long adit stretches before us, lit by our helmet torches, its arched stonework streaked and stained by minerals. We marvel at the precision and detail of the masonry, breathe in smells of damp earth and wood. Led by two miners from nearby Nenthead mines, we're a small group of potters and artists working towards an exhibition inspired by lead mining in the North Pennines.

The colours are astonishing: vivid orange flows stained by iron; milky solidified waterfalls; raspberry-ripple pink from traces of cobalt; elephant-hide greys and sulphurous yellows. The roof gleams with stubby stalactites. Starting out as hollow tubes, they are known as soda straws, formed by central drops of water that deposit calcium carbonate around the tube's rims. This mineral-saturated water encases and transforms – a tangle of what appears to be stone roots is in fact calcified bootlace fungus, the black rhizomorphs of honey fungus that once grew on the decaying timber of pit props or ladders but which are now entombed.

What entrances me most are the cave pearls, shiny ivory pebbles settled in a cupped nest. Drip by drip, they are made by calcium enclosing something as tiny as a grain of sand, the small vibration of each impact keeping them from adhering; this is the image that will stay with me.

Past flooded sumps, through the worked-out "flats" where lead was extracted, we reach a line of water spouts pouring through the side wall. They join the stream running down the adit, the level breaching the top of my wellies; we emerge wet but elated.

At home, I make drawings of the cave pearls, my photos revealing new details: the shallow folds and channels converging on the bowl; the purity of colour; pearls varying in size, some egg-shaped, some with delicately fluted edges. The act of drawing as a quiet recollection of a day underground.

Susie White

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Traffic, mobiles, music … let's turn the noise down

Your editorial is right that noise pollution deserves to be treated as a public-health issue rather than a mere irritation (29 July). Yet one obvious source of urban noise receives little attention: modified cars and motorbikes whose exhausts and engines have been made far louder than manufacturers intended.

Anyone living in a city or town knows the difference between the background hum of traffic and the explosive revving, popping and roaring produced by a small minority of drivers and riders. These vehicles can wake entire terraces, disrupt outdoor spaces and make life less pleasant for everyone else.

What is most baffling is the lack of enforcement. Excessively noisy exhausts are already unlawful, yet action by the police appears rare. Why are police not being held more accountable for enforcing existing noise laws? The MOT regime also seems inadequate. A vehicle can be failed for being "excessively noisy", but there is no routine objective decibel measurement comparable to the precise testing applied to emissions, brakes or lights.

The UK has trialled roadside noise cameras that combine microphones with number-plate recognition, and similar systems operate in other countries. Rolling out such technology more widely would be a straightforward, visible and popular way to improve quality of life in towns and cities.

Mark Ebden
Frome, Somerset

● As someone who is autistic and suffers from misophonia, or extreme sensitivity to noise, I feel noise pollution has increased exponentially since the Covid pandemic.

To the problem of leaf blowers and automatic hand dryers (which are so loud I can't use public toilets that have them), I would add things like public phone use and announcements in public places.

For me the problem is so severe that I now struggle to navigate public spaces, but as you point out, such noise pollution affects all of us, even if we aren't aware of it, with considerable knock-on effects for wildlife.

Deana Heath
Liverpool

● Your editorial struck a chord, although it's not traffic or nightlife that upsets me, but unasked-for music. I'm a musician and composer, and the way my brain is wired does not allow for what other people call "background music". For me, it's all in the foreground.

I used to like going to one-day international cricket matches, but they have introduced musical "stingers" to accompany highlights such as hitting a six or taking a wicket. This has resulted in my deciding to no longer attend. It's the same in restaurants – often waiters cannot turn down the piped racket because it's controlled elsewhere.

Edward Collier
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

● Loud music in shops causes me considerable annoyance. After a recent move to Wales, I have been disappointed to find in this "land of song" that a visit even to an upmarket food store involves an aural assault by what can best be described as nasal wailing.

Sue Zlosnik
Holt, Wrexham

● Shrubs, trees and hedges are some of the best sound barriers, as well as good wind breakers and air filters. They are also temperature moderators and good for our mental health. They should be considered essential in urban environments.

Chloë Thompson
Eynsham, Oxfordshire

India's gen Z and the power of collective action

A crucial point that your editorial on India's gen Z protests (29 July) missed out was that the protests the Cockroach Janta party (CJP) launched in Delhi, hunger strikes and all, were not just supported by young, restless or unemployed people. It was wholeheartedly supported by their parents and grandparents, the old and the middle-aged, even well-off young adults with good jobs and little children. And this was not just in Delhi, but across the country in the huge metropolises of Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Bengaluru, as well as smaller towns. And it was all peaceful, for which credit goes to the ethos of the protests and the CJP.

All of this was suppressed in the mainstream media, print and TV, and even distorted to suggest that it was violent in parts. This reflects not just the overwhelming angst and fear of young graduates facing poor prospects, but the significant grievances of a people who are seeing and experiencing their democracy fading away.

Bhaskar Mani
Bengaluru, India

● Your editorial captures an important truth: movements that begin with a single grievance often evolve into broader demands for justice, accountability and democratic reform. India's gen Z protests are not simply about leaked exam papers; they reflect a generation's frustration with institutions that have failed to protect merit and opportunity.

I could not help thinking about Pakistan. Here, too, students, jobseekers and marginalised communities have long expressed concerns about governance and access to justice. Yet these struggles rarely transform into sustained, nationwide civic movements. Local protests often remain isolated and receive limited attention or fail to generate the solidarity required for lasting institutional reform.

Whether in India or Pakistan, young people deserve institutions they can trust, exams they can believe in and public systems that reward merit rather than connections. The significance of India's movement lies not only in political consequences but in the emergence of a generation that has discovered the power of peaceful collective action. Its long-term impact will depend on whether that energy strengthens democratic institutions rather than deepening divisions.

Nand Lal Rathore
Chachro, Sindh province, Pakistan

Humanist weddings are deeply personal

As a humanist celebrant, I was saddened by Rachel Connolly's conclusion about humanist weddings (It's life, but not as we know it. It's a wedding, 29 July). She writes: "The idea of being married in a humanist service by someone wearing, say, skinny jeans and a black T-shirt gives me willies." I must disclose my ownership of several pairs of skinny jeans, but I have not worn these in my role as a celebrant (though never say never – I'm always guided by couples' dress codes).

Ms Connolly seems to have the impression that a humanist ceremony represents a compromise to the formal and ceremonial rituals we'd traditionally associate with a religious wedding. On the contrary, humanist celebrants are knowledgable, passionate and unashamedly geeky about creating meaningful non-religious ceremonies that are deeply personal to couples and their families.

A non-religious ceremony needn't be unceremonious or casual. I'd love for Ms Connolly to come to one of our weddings to see what the fuss is about, especially with the forthcoming legalisation of humanist marriage ceremonies.

Mair Garland
London

Corrections and clarifications

● **An image of the footballer Melvine Malard, who has moved to Chelsea Women, was mistakenly captioned as being of the men's player João Gomes, whose transfer from Wolverhampton Wanderers to Aston Villa was reported in the same column (In brief, 21 July, p33).**

● **Our TV highlights column misnamed the BBC One show Our Lives: Workhorse as "Our Lives: Heavy Horses" (What to watch, 22 July, G2, p10).**

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Cricket has always had its dark arts

Regarding your editorial on cricket fair play (1 August), as an elderly cricket fan, I can remember being told as a small boy to watch a Yorkshire wicketkeeper who was known, when standing up to the bowler, to nudge the stumps with his toe when the ball was close enough to make it look like "bowled out". But in those days, league cricket was serious business and not played for fun.

Tony Brown
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

● May I present the Seagull outboard race scandal of 1963? At a regatta in Coverack, I was hanging over the bow to keep it down when we were overtaken by a faster boat. With a boathook, I carefully pushed his fuel tap shut; he mysteriously stopped several yards short of the finish line. Did we carry away the prize: 2/6d? My lips are sealed.

Jonathan Fletcher
Helston, Cornwall

● Re dating fossils precisely (Letters, 31 July), I once bought a carton of rock salt whose label said the salt was 10m years old. It then advised that it should be used before the following August.

Richard Barnard
Wivenhoe, Essex

● When I started out as a social worker in 1969, a client told me that dinner was the meal that had potatoes (Letters, 29 July).

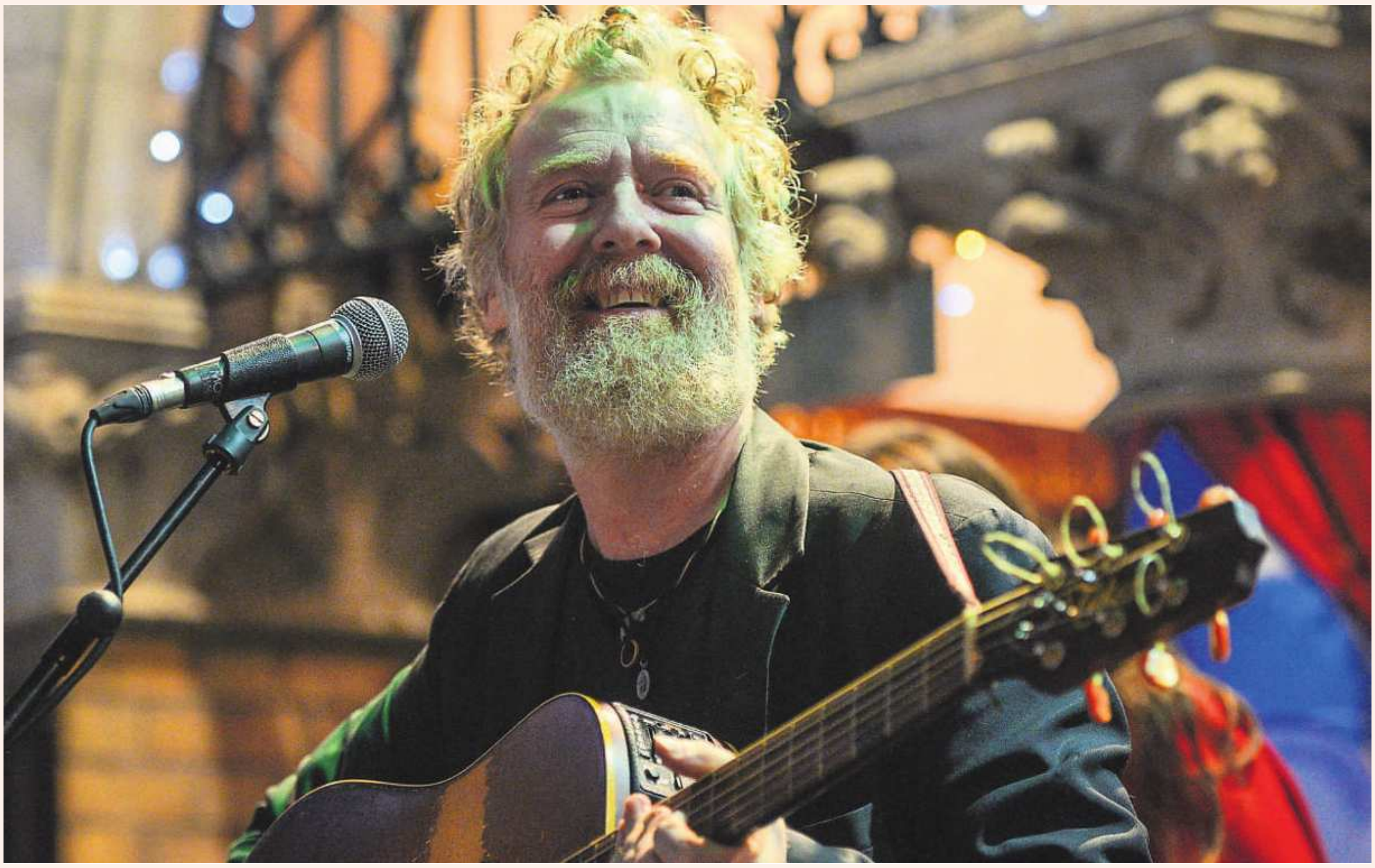
Ron Gould
Brighton, East Sussex

● Breakfast, brunch, elevenses, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner … I've given up and just graze all day.

Dr Bob Aron
Ilkley, West Yorkshire

● Surely dinner is whenever the person who's cooking it says it is.

Pete Bibby
Sheffield



Hansard taking part in Dublin's Christmas Eve busk in 2019
ARTUR WIDAK/NURPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Glen Hansard

Singer, songwriter and founder of the Frames who starred in the hit romantic film Once

Glen Hansard, who has died aged 56 in a motorcycle accident, was one of Dublin's musical heroes - a one-time busker who became an Oscar-winning international star, successful both as a singer-songwriter and as an actor.

He had already built up a stellar local reputation busking regularly on Grafton Street, Dublin, when he decided to form a band, the Frames, along with other musicians he had befriended on the streets.

In the early days of the band he had a call from the film director Alan Parker, asking him to play the guitarist Outspan Foster in the 1991 film version of Roddy Doyle's book The Commitments, the story of a young unemployed Dublin music fan who starts a soul band. With his shock of curly red hair, Hansard was the ideal choice to play the laid-back guitarist - after all, he had lived the role himself. But the filming process was not easy for someone who put his real band first - there was conflict with Parker when Hansard insisted on rescheduling filming so he could perform at a Frames gig.

The film was nevertheless a big hit and Hansard seemed assured of stardom - especially as the band had been signed to Island Records. But it did not immediately work out. Their debut album, Another Love Song (1991), reached only No 77 in the Irish charts, and the label dropped them. But the Frames kept going, playing regularly at the Dublin venue Whelan's, and began to build a strong following. Their second album, Fitzcarraldo (1995), released on ZTT, reached No 26, helped by the anguished lead single Revelate.

From then on, the Frames became an Irish success story. Their fourth album, For the Birds (2001), reached No 6 in the Irish charts, while Burn the Maps (2004) went to No 1. The band kept going - their seventh and final album, Longitude, was released in 2015 - but Hansard now had other interests.

> **Busking is a 'great leveller … the busking education sits at the core of everything I've done since'**

He had begun working with the Czech-Icelandic pianist and singer Markéta Irglová in a duo, the Swell Season, whose self-titled debut album was released in 2006.

They were approached by the director John Carney, who had played bass for the Frames until 1993 and directed some of their videos, to star in his feature film Once, playing struggling musicians who fall in love. They agreed, and also provided the soundtrack for what became a widely successful film, though it had been shot on a shoestring budget. The poignant Falling Slowly won the Oscar for best original song in 2008, and their music would later feature in a Broadway adaptation of the film.

Hansard and Irglová became romantic partners on and off the screen, continuing to work together once the relationship had ended. They toured together and released two more albums, Strict Joy (2009) and Forward (2025).

In his later years, Hansard concentrated mostly on his solo career, which began with the album Rhythm and Repose (2012). His second solo set, the gently reflective folk-rock album Didn't He Ramble (2015), was nominated for a Grammy, as best folk album, the following year. He followed up with Between Two Shores (2018), This Wild Willing (2019) and All That Was East Is West of Me Now (2023). His last release, Don+t Settle, was a two-volume live set in which he revisited songs from throughout his career, backed by his band.

Despite his success, Hansard never forgot his early roots. From 2010 on, he returned to busking in Dublin every Christmas Eve, for what became the Big Busk event outside the Gaiety theatre, near where he once used to sing on Grafton Street. But he was now busking in aid of the Simon Community, a charity that helps the homeless, and the event became an annual fixture that attracted other leading Irish musicians, including Bono, Damien Dempsey and Imelda May. As an activist concerned with homelessness, Hansard joined protesters occupying Apollo House, a vacant building in the centre of Dublin in 2016, to draw attention to the problem in the city.

In December 2023 he was one of the celebrities who performed at the funeral of the Pogues' singer Shane MacGowan, and was joined by Lisa O'Neill to sing MacGowan's best known song, Fairytale of New York.

He made his final London appearance at the Roundhouse in May, on the last night of a UK and European tour. An often intense, bearded figure, he began with the Frames' Revelate, and moved on to songs from his solo albums, including Didn't He Ramble, Grace Beneath the Pines, and - of course - the Swell Season's Oscar-winning Falling Slowly.

Born in Ballymun, a suburb on the north side of Dublin, Glen was one of six children of Catherine (nee Cahill) and James Hansard, a carpenter and talented fiddle player who toured Ireland with showbands in the 1930s and 40s, but was also a heavy drinker, prone to occasional violence. Hansard attended Our Lady of Victories national school in Ballymun, but became more interested in music than schoolwork.

He acquired a guitar from an uncle who had been sent to prison, and taught himself songs by Bob Dylan and Van Morrison.

When he was in his early teens he quit school on the advice of a teacher, who suggested he should become a busker - an unusual career path that the young Hansard followed with relish. He said that busking was a "great leveller", and that "the busking education sits at the core of everything I've done since".

He played at a trad session at the Wren's Nest pub, in west Dublin, just hours before he died in a single-vehicle crash.

He is survived by his wife, Maire Saaritsa, a Finnish poet whom he married in 2022, their son, Christy, and by four brothers and a sister.

Robin Denselow

Glen James Hansard, singer, songwriter and actor, born 21 April 1970; died 29 July 2026

Other lives

Jill Simpson

Dedicated interpretation officer for Pembrokeshire Coast national park and leader of guided walks

As interpretation officer for Pembrokeshire Coast national park, my mother, Jill Simpson, who has died aged 76, shaped the way thousands of people interact with the landscape and its history. She did this through the interpretation boards she designed, the guided walks she created and the artwork she commissioned.

As a volunteer Jill also helped to establish Croeso Arberth - an initiative that settled a Syrian refugee family in Pembrokeshire. In 2017 the group received Liberty's More in Common award, set up in memory of Jo Cox, the Labour MP murdered in 2016. Jill was herself very active in the Labour party.

Born at New Moat farm in Pembrokeshire, she was the daughter of Myrtle (nee Humphries) and Richard Simpson, farmers who had met while serving in the British army. Jill attended several schools, with most of her education as a boarder at St Winifrede's convent in Swansea. From there she went to University College London, graduating with a psychology degree in 1972.

Jill's strong sense of social justice was shaped through her early career: first teaching science at Peckham Manor school, south-east London, then working at a women's shelter, a legal firm, and Release - a drug addiction charity.

By the mid-1970s she had moved into protest squats on Villa Road in Brixton, south London. Jill helped to document the movement as co-author of a chapter in the 1980 book Squatting: The Real Story, and featured in a 2006 documentary. During this time she met my father, Nick Anning, and I was born.

The relationship ended in 1988, and Jill moved back to west Wales, becoming a teacher at Nant-y-Cwm Steiner school. After studying for an environmental master's degree in 2001, she realised that she could work in environmental interpretation doing all of her favourite things: education, improving access to the countryside and connecting people to the natural world.

She started off working for Pembrokeshire Coast national park in 2011, with a stint at Carew Castle, where she dressed up in medieval costumes to bring the history of the castle to life for visitors. She became a ranger the following year, and as part of this led guided walks - her favourite one was the Three Quays walk, where she brought the mining history of the area to life.

As interpretation officer from later that year she played a key role in re-interpreting Castell Henllys iron age fort, and more recently helped to revamp Carew tidal mill. She worked across all the different teams in the park, as well as with countless community groups and organisations.

In recent years, while living in Narbeth, Jill served on the steering committee of the Cleddau Project, working with scientists to improve the health of the river; she volunteered at Clynfyw care farm, supporting adults with learning difficulties; and she raised thousands of pounds for refugees and people affected by conflict.

Jill is survived by me, my father's children from a previous relationship, Vicky and Simon, and her sister, Jane.

Louise Anning

Croeso
Welcome

Jill Simpson with her interpretation board for Carew Castle JEAN RILEY

Joseph Ana

Urologist and GP who worked for the NHS for 20 years and then returned to his homeland of Nigeria

My friend Joseph Ana, who has died aged 73, spent the best part of two decades in the UK working for the NHS as a urologist and a GP.

However, his heart was always in his native Nigeria, where he returned to in order to become a health commissioner. He used the knowledge and experience he had gained in the UK to help rebuild the local healthcare system, overseeing improvements in vaccination rates and the introduction of a state-wide ambulance service.

Born in the city of Zaria, Joseph was the son of Onun Onebieni Uguana Ana, a railway worker, and Ubu Ana, his first wife. Their compound was in Ikot Ana in Cross River state, and they were kingmakers, choosing a monarch from the two royal families.

As a teenager he fought in the Biafran war. After the conflict was over he restarted his education at Duke Town school in Calabar. Following the death of his two older brothers, he became the head of an extensive family.

He graduated from the University of Nigeria medical school in 1978 and worked as a junior doctor at St Margaret's hospital in Calabar. He then took up a surgical residency at the University of Calabar teaching hospital from 1980 to 1982 before deciding to travel to the UK to extend his knowledge.

His wife, Arit Akak, a public health nutritionist, whom he had married in 1977, and their three children joined him in 1984, and he worked for his first 10 years as a doctor and urologist in various hospitals in the south-east of England. He became a GP in 1992, joining a practice in Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, where he realised that his experience of primary care would be useful on his likely return to Africa.

That came about in 2004 when he was headhunted to become health commissioner in his home of Cross River. It was a region with a population of three million but only 72 doctors, and where one in five children died before they were five and one in 100 women died in childbirth. Only a fifth of the population was vaccinated, and 12% were infected with HIV.

Joseph worked on a 12-part clinical governance programme that addressed issues such as funding, education and staff training, as well as patient empowerment. By the end of his tenure, in 2008, 80% of the population were vaccinated and the prevalence of HIV had halved.

After stepping down as health commissioner Joseph became a consultant, offering courses on healthcare management topics in many African countries.

He also advised the Nigerian government and became chair of the World Health Organization's technical advisory group on integrated primary, emergency, operative and critical care.

Joseph was a man of action with a deep Christian faith who would rarely take no for an answer.

He is survived by Arit, their daughter, Mbang, son Onebieni, and five grandchildren, Ubu, Kwadjo, Arit, Erioluwa and Ndemana. Another daughter, Ubu, died in 2007.

Richard Smith

Manzoor Hussain

Engineer and senior lecturer hailed for his significant role in the political and community life of Watford

My father, Manzoor Hussain, who has died aged 88, was a senior lecturer in engineering who made a substantial contribution to public life in Watford, Hertfordshire, as well as to the Muslim community in the local area.

A lecturer in engineering at Ealing Tertiary College in west London for many years, where he was also head of department, Manzoor had arrived in the UK from Pakistan in 1960, and within a couple of decades had become a well-known figure in Watford, where he lived from 1963 onwards.

Someone who had a strong belief in civic duty, he became the first Muslim councillor in Watford, representing the Labour party in its Vicarage ward from 1984 to 1988. He also became an executive committee member of Watford Community Relations council (1982-86), a governor of Watford grammar school (1990-94) and chair of Watford and District Fabian Society (1984-94). In addition, Manzoor played a key role within the Muslim community in Watford, helping to build the town's first mosque and providing educational and welfare guidance.

Manzoor was born in Nala Musalmana, a village on the edge of the Pothohar plateau in the Punjab, in what was British India but is now Pakistan. After attending Denny's high school in Rawalpindi he became the first person in his village to attend university, obtaining a degree in maths and physics from Gordon College in the city.

After moving to the UK he obtained an HND in electronic engineering from Luton College of Technology, and then qualified as a chartered engineer.

In 1972 he decided to become a teacher and the following year he obtained his certificate of education from the Victoria University of Manchester (now University of Manchester).

In 1979 he also gained a degree in electronic engineering from Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University). By 1982 he was a senior engineering lecturer at Acton Technical College. A decade later, by which time it was part of Ealing Tertiary College, he became head of its engineering department until his retirement in 1996.

Aside from his community work in the UK, Manzoor did not forget his home village in Pakistan. With other family members, notably his brother, Muhammad Aslam, he successfully lobbied for the building of a permanent road to Nala Musalmana, and for electrification of the surrounding area. He also raised funds for the building of a girls' high school in the village, as well as a clinic and hospital.

Over the years Manzoor supported and guided his sisters, cousins and various clan members who arrived in the UK, and helped them to settle into their new lives.

He appreciated the UK for its rule of law, egalitarian and altruistic values, and was proud that the next generations of his family were able to be successful in the country in fields such as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, law, IT and teaching.

In 1966 he married Mubarik Begum, a teacher. She survives him, along with their sons, Faisal and me, and five grandchildren.

Qaisar Hussain

Birthdays

Ossie Ardiles, football manager, 74; **Martin Atkins**, drummer, 67; **Robert Ayling**, former chief executive, British Airways, 80; **Steven Berkoff**, actor and director, 89; **Lady (Thangam) Debbonaire**, former Labour MP, 60; **Eamon Dunphy**, broadcaster, 81; **Stephen Graham**, actor, 53; **Prof Christine Hawley**, architect, 77; **Lindsey Hilsum**, broadcaster, 68; **Sir Simon Keenlyside**, baritone, 67; **John Landis**, film director, 76; **Beverly Lee**, singer, 85; **Mark Ormerod**, former chief executive, supreme court, 69; **Edward Petherbridge**, actor, 90; **Sue Slipman**, former director, Foundation Trust Network, 77; **Jack Straw**, former Labour MP and cabinet minister, 80; **Sir Michael Wilshaw**, former chief inspector of schools, Ofsted, 80; **Christian Wolmar**, author and broadcaster, 77.

Puzzles

Saturday's solutions

Sandwich sudoku

1	3	6	9	5	8	7	2	4	9
9	4	7	3	2	1	6	8	5	16
2	5	8	4	6	7	1	3	9	3
7	1	5	8	4	2	3	9	6	22
3	2	9	6	7	5	8	4	1	30
6	8	4	1	3	9	2	5	7	3
8	7	1	2	9	4	5	6	3	2
5	9	3	7	8	6	4	1	2	28
4	6	2	5	1	3	9	7	8	3
0	17	4	21	8	14	22	15	6	

Killer Sudoku 1033

9	7	6	2	5	8	1	3	4
4	5	8	6	3	1	2	7	9
2	3	1	4	7	9	5	8	6
6	1	2	3	9	5	7	4	8
8	9	3	7	4	2	6	5	1
7	4	5	8	1	6	9	2	3
3	2	9	1	8	7	4	6	5
5	6	4	9	2	3	8	1	7
1	8	7	5	6	4	3	9	2

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 30,068

P	R	E	D	A	W	N	■	G	O	R	I	L	L	A
■	O	■	R	■	A	■	G	■	X	■	L	■	O	■
T	U	T	U	■	G	O	O	D	F	E	L	L	O	W
■	T	■	N	■	O	■	T	■	O	■	H	■	R	■
S	I	N	K	I	N	■	H	E	R	E	U	P	O	N
■	N	■	■	■	E	■	E	■	D	■	M	■	L	■
T	E	A	F	O	R	T	W	O	■	J	O	L	L	Y
■	■	■	A	■	■	■	H	■	■	■	U	■	■	■
S	P	A	C	E	■	S	O	U	R	C	R	E	A	M
■	A	■	T	■	W	■	L	■	E	■	■	■	M	■
P	I	N	O	C	H	L	E	■	L	A	R	D	E	R
■	N	■	R	■	E	■	H	■	I	■	I	■	R	■
S	T	R	I	K	E	Z	O	N	E	■	G	R	I	T
■	E	■	S	■	Z	■	G	■	V	■	H	■	C	■
F	R	E	E	Z	E	R	■	L	E	T	T	H	A	T

This week's winners of The Language Lover's Puzzle Book are:
Tabby Brindle, Impington
Daniel Jones, Cambridge
Kathryn Clark, Hayle
Sue Procter, Newcastle upon Tyne
Barry Butler, Birmingham
Please allow 28 days for delivery

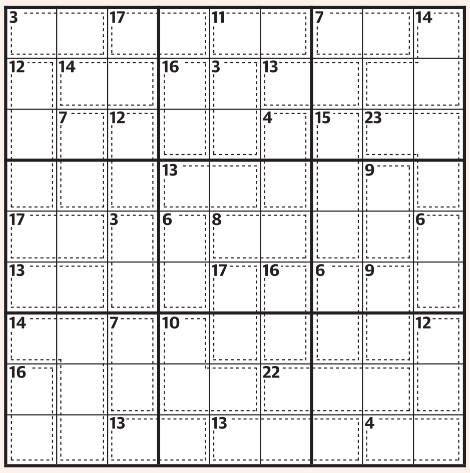
Looking for more?

*Download the **Guardian app** for more puzzles, including our new Premier League game, On the Ball, and our movie quiz, Film Reveal. Plus clues and answers to all our interactive crosswords and sudoku. Available in the Apple App Store and Google Play.*

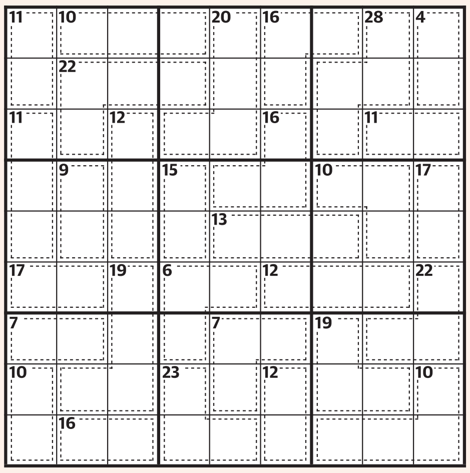
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.



Medium



Codeword

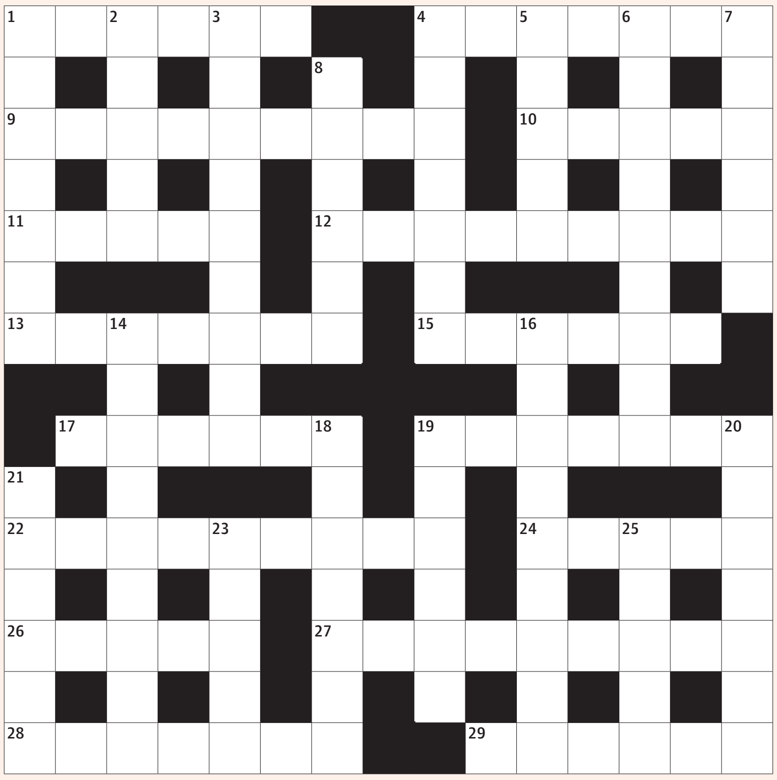
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

20	■	19	■	26	■	3	■	12	■	7	■	15
11	13	15	23	5	20	11	■	22	19	6	8 I	24
23	■	26	■	24	■	22	■	24	■	19	■	5
17	19	5	23	6	■	21	19	25	8	6	24	22
11	■	19	■	11	■	5	■	2	■	8	■	6
■	12	8	23 L	20	11	22	■	9	24	15	5	7
19	■	25	■	■	■	16	■	5	■	■	■	10
1	11	6	6	11	22	■	19	23	18	19	23	8
19	■	■	■	25	■	8	■	■	■	22	■	3
25	8	2	10	6	■	4	11	25	19	15	11	■
20	■	19	■	12	■	3	■	5	■	10	■	4
24	5	6	7	8	14	11	■	6	24	20	19	16
25	■	11	■	25	■	19	■	4	■	5	■	22
11	17	19	20	11	■	15	10	11	15	18	11	22
20	■	5	■	20	■	10	■	2	■	11	■	10

A B C D E F G H ~~I~~ J K ~~L~~ M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 I	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23 L	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 30,075 set by Carpathian



Across
- **1** Disguised male questioned (6)
- **4** Dish of unusual grain (7)
- **9** Uncle cuts up plant (9)
- **10** Short tenor getting refreshed on and off (5)
- **11** Sample bit of pasta stealthily (5)
- **12** Make speech after European scientist's workplace gets involved (9)
- **13** Bill quietly left a club? (7)
- **15** Root of change I proposed initially (6)
- **17** Effigy of union's leader embraced by nation (6)
- **19** Brief note concerning one Conservative snorting cocaine (7)
- **22** That woman sorted out table with a hot drink (6,3)
- **24** Pleased with mouse finally finding space in forest (5)
- **26** Smooths out chains (5)
- **27** Mugger is idiot upset by six footer (9)
- **28** Quibbler holds new medallion (7)
- **29** Hammered bachelor put away (6)

Down
- **1** Fail to attend precious flipping trip (7)
- **2** Request for help involving Calvin Klein footwear (5)
- **3** Former ride-share company worker is vivacious (9)
- **4** Withdraw from English area after start of revolution (7)
- **5** Traitor I love in proportion (5)
- **6** Pub ban before Scotsman gets savage (9)
- **7** Former X contributor without sway (6)
- **8** Protect upstanding US agent on border (6)
- **14** PM behind expression of hesitation regarding accepting refusal (9)
- **16** Try rising during sincere broadcast for Grant (9)
- **18** Competitor in event ran tirelessly (7)
- **19** Is a lie tricky to communicate? (6)
- **20** Be unfaithful to Charlie with passion and touching (5,2)
- **21** Small person parking next to quiet verge (6)
- **23** Disorganised leaders of army training session elicit apathy (2,3)
- **25** Anticipate a pressure for auditor (5)

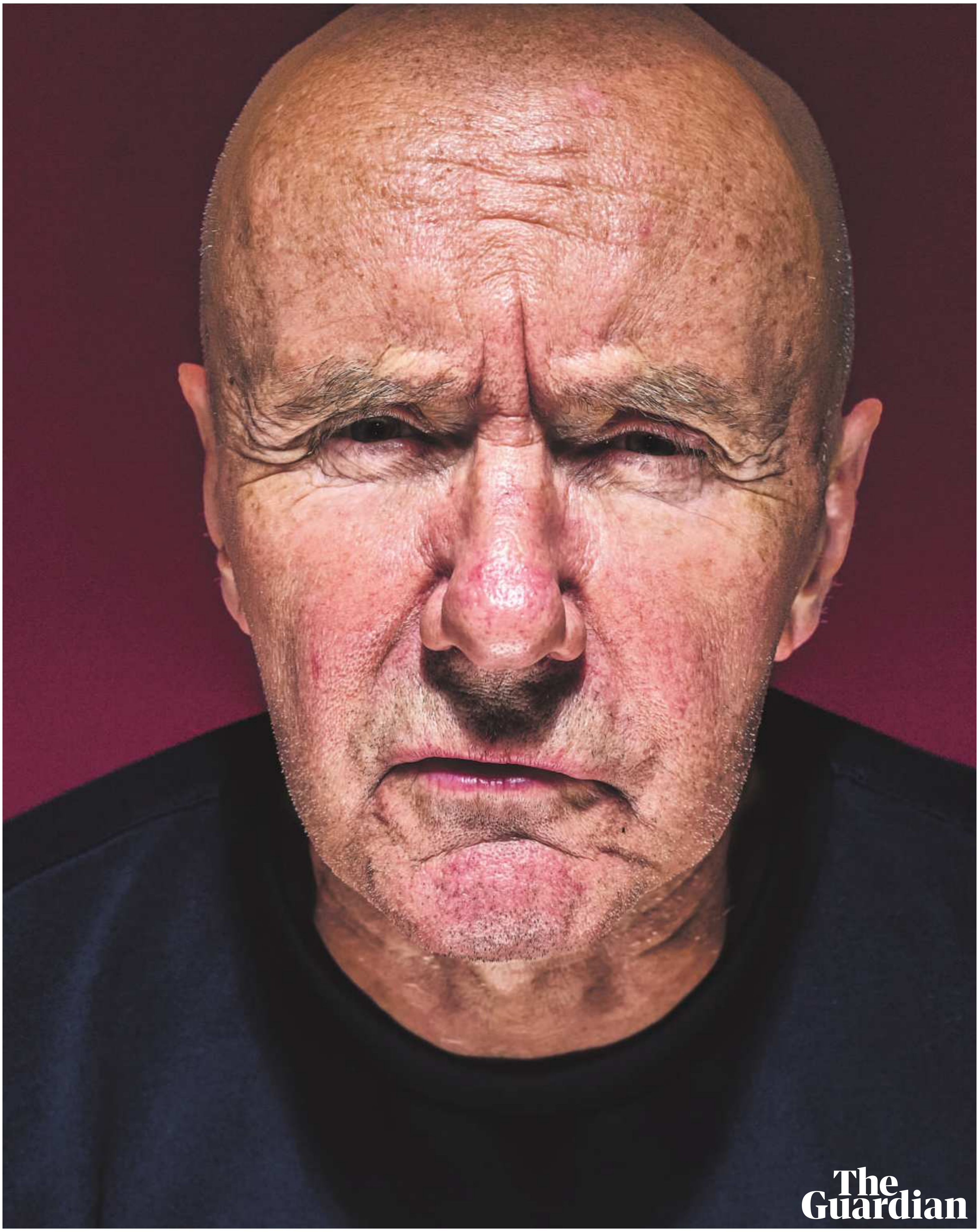
Want more? Get access to more than 4,000 puzzles at **theguardian.com/crossword**. To buy puzzle books, visit **guardianbookshop.com** or call **0330 333 6846**.

Life&Arts

Monday 3 August 2026

Choose breathwork. Choose yin yoga. Choose life!

Irvine Welsh on the joys of wellness – and ‘banging out’ his new novel



The Guardian

Emma Beddington
How to survive the summer
page 3

Wynton Marsalis
‘I want to bring people together’
page 8

THE ONE CHANGE THAT WORKED

I learned to love my arms – after decades of hating and hiding them

It took a heatwave to get me to shed my shame and my sleeves, but now there's no stopping me. Life is cooler in every way

Amy Annette

'Aren't you hot in that?" was the question that plagued my summers as a teenager. I would never bare my arms; instead, I would cover up with a trusty black cardigan. Even T-shirts felt too revealing; too tight on the arms, too clinging to the body. I needed layers in order to feel comfortable when I was out. Well, comfortable isn't the right word. I was never comfortable, despite telling everyone: "No, I'm not hot. I don't really feel the heat."

In my 20s and 30s, I collected a hot-weather capsule wardrobe of T-shirt dresses in various sizes, all baggy and sleeved. But why? I'm someone who should know better. I've read the books, I've shared the memes. I know, from body-positivity activists, that you don't have to deny yourself the joy of being at the beach or pool just because a magazine tells you that you have to get yourself "beach-body ready": slimmer, hairless, perfect.

I'm also someone who understands logically that a cardigan may cover you, but it doesn't hide your body shape. When I hide my skin, I don't make myself magically disappear, but I do make myself smaller. I'm showing the world that I respect beauty norms and that I know I don't meet them.

I learned to hate my arms listening to other women talk about theirs. Arm hatred feels like a homegrown industry – by women for women. Arms don't have the mainstream attention of beauty standards. Perhaps it's because they aren't sexualised. I don't remember seeing a lads' mag spread on "Barbara from Bradford's biceps" when I was growing up.

But last month it was my friend's birthday. That day, the temperature was more than 30C in London. The idea of putting any real clothing on and leaving the house seemed impossible, but I had to be there. I looked at my small selection of heatwave-appropriate clothes. None of them were very celebratory. I looked through the hangers for something else.

My eye was drawn to a white sleeveless shirt, bought in Austin, Texas, where they dress for the constant heat – I'd bought it thinking I'd wear it one day, probably with a jacket. At that moment, something shifted and, despite years of conditioning to hate my arms, my hatred of the heat won. I put the sleeveless shirt on. (I added a pair of navy culottes with a white band at the bottom that made me feel like a fancy little Victorian boy, if he had access to Asos.) At 37, outside a swimming pool, I was bare-armed in public for the first time.

And, of course, it was fine. No one cared. If they did, they didn't tell me. I haven't been properly catcalled in years (I look too old not to yell back) and the revealing of my BCG vaccination scar didn't change that. I can't believe it had taken me this long.

The next day, I posted about it on Instagram. I have a video series called Diary of a Sweaty Girl, where I chronicle my life as, you guessed it, a sweaty girl. I shared that the climate crisis had overtaken sexist body standards and had somehow freed me from my besleeved burden. Others shared that they too were experiencing their "first year arms out no shame" because they "couldn't be bothered any more". That's how I felt. Yes, it was lovely to have my arms out, but it wasn't a celebratory feeling. It was more like waking up: a softer, quieter change.

On holiday, I danced the night away, getting more mosquito bites than ever

And did it make things cooler? Yes, it turns out you do keep a lot of heat in if you cover the upper arms and shoulders.

The week after my heatwave brainwave, I went on holiday with a group of friends. The change stuck. Instead of always having some sort of cover-up to hand, I was happy to be in my swimsuit. During hot French evenings, I didn't find a way to fashion a shirt over my outfit; I wore a sleeveless dress and danced the night away, getting more mosquito bites on my shoulders than ever before.

Now, I'm reconsidering my wardrobe. I'm no longer letting my friends talk about their arms negatively in front of me. I'm trying to quell that inner voice that whispers: "But is it flattering?" I'm still figuring out this new changed version of myself. And I'm wondering, if it's gets any hotter, what other internalised standards I will sweat out.

Amy Annette's show Say What You Like About Me is at the Edinburgh fringe from 5-30 August at the Pleasance theatre

PHOTOGRAPH: ALICIA CANTER/THE GUARDIAN

THE PET I'LL NEVER FORGET

Karl, the tabby who learned to use the toilet

When my cat Eric passed away from stomach cancer in 2001, I wasn't sure I would ever be ready to have a pet again. But a few months later I was given another cat, Karl, by an old friend from Camberwell College of Arts in south London. I had known Karl when I was a student there, where he had been mates with Eric. Karl, an unassuming brown tabby with a judgmental glare, took me back to living in student halls in the 90s.

Karl was perhaps the most average-looking tabby in south London, but on my quiet street he became a legend of sorts. He accompanied my children and me on school runs. He would walk ahead with his belly swinging and take us to the top of the road. There he would wait to escort me back home.

During his time at college, Karl had learned how to use the toilet. He would climb on to the seat, lift his tail up and aim directly into the bowl. It was like a party trick he had picked up.

He would sit in the front garden for "chats" with passersby and neighbours I didn't even know. He remembered their routines, so he knew when to be waiting for his daily pats.

In 2008, I was awaiting the birth of my third child – a baby I knew that Karl would only tolerate at best. On the walls of the front garden he stood as the neighbourhood watch. It was also where he was killed.

Karl was sadly mauled by an unruly dog. Neighbours, who had played with him and talked to him all these years, rushed out to my desperate screams. They stood next to me as he died in my arms.

My partner, Tim, had trained as a funeral director before deciding to become a chef and he decided that Karl needed a fitting send-off. We had a funeral that same night. Our neighbours attended and we played music as we lowered Karl and his shoebox coffin into our back garden.

I was so caught up in my grief, I hadn't realised how many people had loved Karl. I got more condolence cards than when my mother died. I could hear people walking past my house asking: "Where's the cat?"

Tim knew some stonemasons from his funeral director days, so we had a plaque commissioned. We put it on the front wall at cat height, so people who had knelt to stroke Karl could see it. When I moved homes in 2019, I offered to remove it for the new tenants. Surprisingly, they refused. Nearly 20 years on, the memory of Karl the cat lives on in a quiet suburban street.

Nadya Smith, as told to Faisa Mohamed

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN. PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT: FLORA LUNA. THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF NADYA SMITH

Emma Beddington

If summer is getting you down, here are my top survival strategies

Unfortunately for hairdressers, "How's your summer going?" is a loaded question this year. Even basking lizards and barbecue obsessives are wavering as cataclysmic wildfires engulf our nearest neighbours (and threaten the UK), Wales and parts of England enter "exceptionally serious" drought, and farmers issue dire warnings about our food supply in the near future. Lazy, joyful, sunscreen-scented days are giving way to stifling, existentially terrifying ones spent skulking in the dark (assuming you don't need to be out in the extreme heat, as many workers do), sweatily scrolling through apocalyptic images.

Vanity Fair has decreed it's a "sad-girl summer", highlighting the female singer-songwriters soundtracking the myriad anxieties of an "undeniably cruel" 2026 season. But it's not just the girlies who are sad – many of us are struggling and we still have August to survive. How?

I'm a veteran of sad-girl summers. For years, July and August have sent me into an anxious, distressed funk, afflicted by brain shutdowns that leave me useless for days at a time. That means I'm ahead of the curve in finding little survival tactics, so here are some, if you find yourself struggling with what used to be the carefree, fun season.

Treat yourself like a beloved dog
Look at canine heatwave advice and apply it to yourself. Little walks in the coolest parts of the day, frozen treats, wet towels and top-ups of chilled water will all help maintain your mental equilibrium. Naps won't hurt, either.

Enjoy what summer still does well
Namely fruit. The blackberries are already ripe (yes, worrying), there are peaches so juicy you have to eat them over the sink, fat and fragrant green figs and chunks of crisp, sweet watermelon to be bought. Also, not every apricot I've tried has been a sour marble of disappointment and I've even eaten melons my French in-laws wouldn't have drop-kicked off their dinner table in righteous fury. This glut of good fruit is one puny (and doubtless temporary) upside.

Take up a temporary hobby
Distract yourself with something ultra-low stakes. Last year, I tried growing melons. My misshapen babies were inedibly disgusting, but tending them helped during my twitchiest hours. This summer's project is "making elaborate salads that would cost £17 in London". Every day, I craft a photogenic heap of fancy, fibremaxxing fodder, take a picture, save it on my phone in a folder called "lunch" (that I will delete in September), then feast. It's daft, but it is the high point of many distressing, scratchy-brained days.

Start your day with a book
Defer your engagement with the horrors – they'll still be there in half an hour. Immerse yourself in something – anything – offline for a while. If your concentration is shot and you fear you will struggle not to scroll, the novelist Naomi Alderman is running a brilliant reading version of Couch to 5K on her Substack.

Delete your weather app
I am not saying weather apps are gaslighting us, but it can feel like that when you are in the grip of summer derangement. Watching a tantalising chance of rain in five days' time fall from 90% to 40% to 20%, then disappear altogether, or temperatures hover around the mid-30s, is at best a waste of time, at worst maddening. For a few weeks, switch off and experience weather in the way your ancestors did: as an awe-inspiring, often awful but occasionally wonderful thing that happens (possibly because you have displeased the gods).

Become a bit nocturnal
It is often too hot to sleep at your normal bedtime and there's a special quality to summer nights that never quite get dark or cold. Last night, I saw bats, a hedgehog and many foxes in my suburb, but I enjoy late wanders around big cities, too. There is almost always something unhinged going down that affirms how the inside of my head feels.

Remind yourself you're right
It's sane and rational to feel angry, grief-stricken and frightened. Wouldn't it be weirder if you didn't?

▼ *If pets get treats in hot weather, why shouldn't we?*

We've always judged each other – but it's worse now

Are we living in an "era of microsnobberies"? Writing in the Washington Post last week, the lifestyle influencer Victoria Wolff asserted that we are, claiming that the fragmentation of American taste facilitated by, and expressed through, social media had created a new phenomenon of "hundreds of tribes" judging each other on highly specific sets of status signifiers.

Wolff cited a few – "your children's lunch boxes, whether your roses are native and if your olive oil has a story" – that left me feeling like a grubby little peasant with my narratively inadequate oil, but also relieved not to live in Amagansett in the Hamptons, as she does. It sounds like a Nancy Meyers meets Edith Wharton hellscape. Indeed, I was reminded of reading earlier this year about the tiny-batch $80 (£60) fruit pies you're supposed to bring as a "hostess gift" in those parts (etiquette specialists advise Hobnobs remain an acceptable hostess gift in the suburbs of York).

I'm not convinced microsnobberies are new. If anything, when communities were more insular and less connected, surely the sets of rules they established were even more exacting and specific, the markers of difference in social status even more microscopic? I've just read Julian Barnes' The Man in the Red Coat, which paints "narcissistic and neurotic" belle époque Paris as a bitchy hotbed of microsnobberies, with incestuous social circles writing about trivial transgressions in place of today's Substacks and Instagram posts. It's human nature, not a product of internet social atomisation – the impulse to judge each other, and feel judged, on minutiae is eternal.

The only real escape I ever found was in living abroad. During 12 years in Brussels, I internalised the broad-brush macrosnobberies – the "right" areas, the (vital) hierarchy of chocolatiers – but remained happily oblivious if I was introducing myself gauchely or buying beyond-the-pale condiments. Man, it was mentally restful and I miss it – I could be tempted to move somewhere new just to be blissfully socially clueless again.

Race you to the hospital!

Exercise should make you stronger - but sometimes it just breaks you. Surgeons explain how to avoid the operating theatre

Anna Moore

Jonathan Price has always been active and exercise-focused. Growing up in south Wales, rugby was his first love. Through school, university and beyond, he also surfed, rowed, played squash and ran competitively - on track, in 10k races and cross-country. Career and family demands meant that much of this fell away in later years, but the running stuck. He found time for marathons, half marathons - “I’d run a half marathon every weekend just for fun,” he says - and, through the working week, regular 30- or 40-minute runs to manage stress and clear his head. “I travel a lot for work,” says Price, now 50, a company CEO. “With running, all you need is a pair of running shoes and you can do it anywhere.”

By his mid-40s, though, Price’s body was beginning to object. He wasn’t recovering so well. “I could run just fine but I’d be in pain for two or three days afterwards,” he says. On top of this, every six months or so, his lower back seemed to seize up completely. A physiotherapist thought it was “tight hip flexors” and pointed Price towards “hip opening” exercises, designed to reduce stiffness and increase range of motion. Someone else prescribed him muscle relaxants, but the pain only deepened, and his range of movement continued to dip. Finally, in the summer of 2023, a chance encounter with a hip surgeon led to the diagnosis of osteoarthritis and, at the end of that year, Price, then 47, had a double hip replacement.

Was Price unlucky, or did decades of exercise accelerate his joint damage? After so many years, so many miles, and so many cycles of use, had he simply, as his surgeon, Giles Stafford, puts it, “hit his number”?

As a consultant orthopaedic hip surgeon specialising in sports-related hip disorders, Stafford often sees patients who are experiencing joint problems earlier than most. “They are usually active people who have done a lot of sport and knackered their joints,” he says. Stafford likens our joints to bearings in a car. “There’s clearly a genetic aspect, but also a big mechanical aspect too,” he says. “We all have a certain number of cycles in us before the damage sets in, and someone who is going to the gym, running marathons, taking on high-impact, high-intensity, repetitive exercise programmes might hit their number younger and faster.”

> *‘When I went to lift the sandbag, my knee popped out. Then it did it again’*

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the painful result of the breakdown of cartilage, the smooth, slippery tissue that cushions the ends of our bones so that we can move our joints freely without friction. OA is on the rise. Each year, more than a quarter of a million people in the UK have joint replacement surgery, and by 2060 demand is expected to have risen by 40%. While there is evidence of rising cases in younger people, by the age of 70 one in two UK adults will have OA. For some, that might just mean some stiffness while walking up the stairs. For others, it could mean needing help to wash and dress. In old age, OA will often determine whether someone can live independently and if their final years are spent navigating pain.

When it comes to causes, though, the picture is confusing. The way we are made is key. Our genes help determine our build, our gait, how we load our joints and where the pressure falls when we move. Genetics are also believed to play a role in the quality of our cartilage and the inflammatory responses that can damage it and drive OA forward. Price now knows that he was born with a

▶ *Orthopaedic surgeons recommend swimming or cycling to soften the impact on our joints*

PHOTOGRAPHS: GUARDIAN DESIGN; GETTY IMAGES; SAMUEL MCELWEE STUDIOS/ BECOMINGX/WORLD’S DEEPEST MARATHON; COURTESY OF CHRIS DUNN

◀ *'People don't understand how important recovery is'*

OUTLAW ORIGINAL

▶ *'The runner's mindset is it'll repair itself' … Chris Dunn competing in an Ironman event in July*

'Many of my patients have done a lot of sport and knackered their joints'

subtle shape abnormality that is not uncommon. The ball of his hip joint's ball-and-socket wasn't quite spherical, so it didn't rotate smoothly without friction, which over time, accelerated damage with each cycle of use. Beyond genetics, though, is asking too much of our bodies, or asking too little raising our OA risk? Should we worry about over-exercise, not enough exercise or the wrong kind of exercise? The answer, unfortunately, seems to be all three.

A sedentary lifestyle is a major driver. This is partly due to OA's link with obesity, which increases the weight on our joints, and raises inflammation, but exercise matters beyond this. Cartilage relies on synovial fluid - joint fluid - for its nourishment, and we need to move around in order for that fluid to circulate. "Sitting for long periods of the day also seems to cause metabolic changes that are pro-inflammatory," says Dr Benjamin Ellis, consultant rheumatologist at Imperial College Healthcare in London. Building strength and muscle also acts to absorb impact and stabilise our joints. "Our joints, our bones, our bodies strengthen under challenge and that is done by tiny micro-injuries," says Ellis. "The body goes in to heal them and that healing builds bone and muscle."

On the other hand, if we overload the body's capacity to heal, or sustain too great an injury, we're back in the OA danger zone, though it may take decades for the effects to be felt. An anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury - a tear or sprain in the centre of the knee - is one example. Professional footballers, who are prone to ACL injuries, have two or three times the average risk of OA in later life. Research also points to a raised OA risk among competitive runners - while recreational running seems to be protective. (Unhelpfully, the definition of "recreational" and "competitive" varies between studies.) Many orthopaedic surgeons - Stafford included - recommend cycling, swimming or an elliptical trainer over running, or running on grass or a treadmill rather than tarmac to soften the impact on our joints.

According to David Vaux, an osteopath, consultant for Arthritis Action and author of Stronger, exercise in midlife should be viewed a bit like a dosage of medicine. "If you do too much or too little, you're going to be in trouble," he says. "The main thing I see in clinic are people who are injured, and people who are burnt out - and those two things are kryptonite in midlife." Both can lead someone to stop exercising altogether, or to keep going too hard before they have recovered. Either can result in OA.

For most midlifers, says Vaux, a healthy exercise programme is steady and consistent, with built-in recovery time. He says: "It can look quite boring, but boring is good."

Saket Tibrewal, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon at Cromwell hospital in London who specialises in the knee, makes a similar point. "As we get older, our capacity to heal takes longer," he says. "I do see a lot of runners who have taken it up in the last few years, and are starting to get knee pain and knock-on effects. They might be going for a run, then doing it again the next day, or just having one day off. People don't understand how important recovery is."

Several orthopaedic surgeons have expressed reservations about high-intensity, high-impact exercise programmes. "Anything that involves a lot of deep-weighted squats, and repeatedly taking your body to end range under load, can damage your joints," says Stafford. Gareth Jones, a specialist knee surgeon at Imperial College, has seen patients in their mid-20s and early 30s who have already lost a lot of cartilage from under their kneecaps through following such programmes. One of Tibrewal's patients is Naomi Pannell, 27, who recently tore her ACL competing in a CrossFit event.

"I was in the semi-finals in Madrid, my biggest competition yet," says Pannell. "It happened on day three, the last day, in 36C heat." Pannell and her partner had completed the chest-to-bar pull-ups and the double-unders (like skipping except the rope passes under your feet twice in one jump) and next came four rounds of "sandbags" (lifting a heavy sandbag from the floor and resting it on the shoulder). "When I went to lift the sandbag for my second round, my knee popped out and popped in again," says Pannell. "I didn't fall to the floor. I went to lift it again and it did the same thing." She completed some of the remaining circuit - including a handstand walk - and by the end her knee was badly swollen. "When I found out it was a full ACL rupture, I spent a week crying," says Pannell. "I've never had an injury in my life." Tibrewal, who will be operating on Pannell, blames fatigue. "These programmes are very good for cardiovascular fitness and strength, but they involve high repetition and high loading, and fatigue is a badge of honour," he says. "After multiple rounds, if you're pushed to the point where your muscles are really tired, then you can lose neuromuscular control of the joint. You lose proprioception - your body's internal awareness of where it is in time and space - and that's when something simple that you've done many times before can go wrong."

According to Vaux, a healthy midlife exercise regime that's protective against OA involves "steps and reps". "A walk, a jog, a bike ride a couple of times a week and you need strength training, too. I usually prescribe following an isometric-only strength programme - such as wall sits and planks, which you can do anywhere - for at least two months before you do anything more dynamic [in terms of strength training]. If someone is doing that, I'll take that person's chances on healthy joints in 20 years' time over anyone doing anything extreme and get-fit-quick."

The most important thing is listening to your body. "Pain alone isn't always a reliable guide because some discomfort can be a normal part of adaptation," says Vaux, "but persistent joint pain, night pain or pain on certain movements, swelling and stiffness should not be ignored. It's your body telling you there is an issue." It's also important to understand your level of fatigue. "Is your performance stable, improving or decreasing? Decreasing performance indicates you are not recovering properly. How are you sleeping? Is your heart rate significantly elevated first thing the day after exercise? The solution to any of these might be to get something checked out, or to modify your exercise and rest."

Chris Dunn, 49, a dedicated runner, waited until he had grade-four bone-on-bone OA in his knee before he stopped running and had it looked at. "I can probably track it back to 2015, when a bad tackle in football twisted my ACL," he says. Despite the injury, that same year he completed an Ironman triathlon and a marathon. In the years since, he had continued to compete in many more marathons, as well as regular triathlons. "My leg was probably weakened and I weakened it more, my alignment shifted to compensate, and that overloaded different parts of the knee joint," he says. "Silly really - I left it too long - but once you're in the runner's mindset, you think: 'It'll be all right. It'll repair itself.' When you push yourself to the limits, it's uncomfortable anyway! You tell yourself it's just a twinge. By 2023, it had got to the point where I was only able to do 5 or 6km of running and afterwards it was so painful I could only hobble."

In May 2024, Dunn underwent five hours of surgery to straighten his leg and try to offload the damaged area. It was very successful. "I was home the next day with a knee brace," he says. "I stayed on crutches until August. The following April, I did the London Marathon and in July I did an Ironman. At the moment, running feels comfortable. There's a chance that years down the line I might need a knee replacement, but we'll play it by ear. I want to enjoy it while I can."

Price also got back to running after his double hip replacement. Last year, he completed the world's deepest marathon, which took place in a zinc mine in Sweden. "It took a while to get past that strange sensation where everything feels different, but once I started running, it got easier and easier," he says. Pannell, meanwhile, is hoping to compete in the CrossFit Open in February.

"There's no universal threshold beyond which exercise becomes harmful," says Vaux. "It's shaped by so many factors - such as age, genetics, previous injuries - and it isn't fixed: it can expand as tissues adapt. That's one of the remarkable things about the human body. But we need to give it time to get there, and to listen to what it's telling us on the way."

▼ *'I'd be in pain for two or three days after running' … Jonathan Price (left) takes part in the world's deepest marathon in Sweden*

JONATHAN
JACK 30
37

‘I’m more Zen than I used to be’

Three decades after channelling his heroin addiction into Trainspotting, Irvine Welsh has discovered the joys of healthy living. He talks about growing old, getting clean, bashing out his new novel – and flirting with guns

Paula Cocozza

▲ *Robert Carlyle and Ewan McGregor in the film of Trainspotting*

By rights, Irvine Welsh ought to be photographed somewhere gritty, looking grumpy, he says: “That’s the brand.” Beside a graffitied wall or at the docks, with a beanie pulled low and definitely not smiling. But here he is, clear-skinned and wholesome in shorts and a T-shirt, drinking tea and – it’s hard to think of anything more off-brand – talking about the health benefits of yoga. Given his reputation for having lived in the worlds his books portray, he should or could look a lot worse. He guffaws at this, eyes a delighted blue, and repeats the phrase as if he’s found a new personal tagline: “Could look a lot worse!”

Over the three decades since his cult debut, Trainspotting, was published in 1993, Welsh’s fiction has explored with humour the darker side of life. Drugs, clubs, alcohol, violence … often alongside psychological or social deprivation. Despite being 17 novels and four short-story collections into his career, selling more than 6m books globally, he remains best known for his first. It achieved, he says, “what most writers want to achieve in a lifetime – the big zeitgeist book that goes into the culture”.

Welsh’s new book, Can Nothing Save Us?, is a big American novel and applies the same sharp-eyed realism that Trainspotting brought to working-class Edinburgh to Trump’s US. Set in the scorching heat of Las Vegas, it’s a multigenerational thriller in which, as one character puts it: “Everyone is dissatisfied. Democracy over. A confused citizenry reduced to helping rich egomaniacs build fiefdoms.” Sound familiar?

Welsh, who grew up in Muirhouse, north Edinburgh, has spent swathes of the past 20 years in the US, after marrying his second (now ex-) wife, Beth Quinn, who’s American, in 2005. He still has a home in Miami (and in London and Edinburgh). “I was there when Obama first got elected and I was there when Trump first got elected,” he says. In the run-up to Trump’s presidency, Welsh wasn’t too worried. The professional, educated women he knew barely gave him a thought, focusing instead on his rival. “Clinton,” he says. “She was the one that brought on the real seethe. She was [seen as] an enabler of the worst kind of guy – the liberal sex pest in sheep’s clothing.”

Trump remains an unarticulated presence in Welsh’s novel, an orange glow emanating from a fictional TV. Did Welsh fear litigation? “I wanted to show real people. I didn’t want to get into the politics of those wankers because they’ve got too much to say for themselves already,” Welsh says. Instead, in the midst of an affordability crisis, climate crisis, health crises and complex family relationships, all the novel’s characters are searching for the moral heart of their story.

Can Nothing Save Us? is published this month, but it has a long back story. Welsh originally thought he was collecting material for an HBO pilot on the superstar DJ – this was in 2014 – with his friend Calvin Harris. (Welsh also DJs and co-owns a record label.) From the DJ boxes of Las Vegas, he’d look out at “this ugly scene where middle-aged sleazy guys grind up against young women who’ve been comped for the clubs” – but the project stalled and Welsh realised he had the makings of something different: “A novel about modern America.”

He gave the draft to his editor and some writer friends. “They all said the same thing. ‘This is shit!’”

Welsh re-read it. “Fuck, they’re right,” he thought.

Rejection must be unfamiliar to a multimillion-selling novelist. But Welsh did manage to sell the screen rights, and while he watched the writers’ room work through his pages, he became “a voyeur of my own material” and understood how to fix his novel. By now, Welsh had seen his friend Jake Chapman’s film Accelerate or Die and he’d read the work of the accelerationists Nick Land and Sadie Plant – broadly speaking, accelerationism is the idea that technology and capitalism must speed up if humanity is to reach a better place. In Welsh’s novel, time flips forward and lurches back.

“People have got that existential crisis. Everything is going too fast for us to control,” he says.

So what can save us? “What does save us is the inherent insanity and unworkability of the system,” Welsh says, crashing down his tea.

His proofs of “unworkability” include the decline of social media usage (“If you argue with someone on social media, you’re basically saying you haven’t got a sex life”), the dimming of the lights in Las Vegas (“You watch Vegas sneeze and the rest of America is catching cold”), “enshittification”, the climate crisis, the “radicalisation of the centre” in British and US politics, and the internet in general.

The novel strings a path through all this from the My Lai massacre in Vietnam in 1968 to modern mass shootings and, true to brand, climaxes in spectacular carnage.

Welsh doesn’t own a gun, but he had a transformative experience at the Lock & Load shooting range in Miami. It’s “massively seductive”, he says, “when you start shooting at things”. He thought he’d be “skittish”. But no. “I was a stone-cold assassin. I really enjoyed it. I was feeling the power of it.”

He got to thinking: “How would it be for a dispossessed kid who’s got no money and can’t get into the system and you’re told that you’re rubbish, and suddenly you’ve got this thing in your hand …”

When Welsh left Lock & Load, “I wanted to shoot live prey,” he says. “To hunt something down. I thought: ‘Fucking hell! What’s going on with me?’ This is a drug. You know? I went twice and I thought: ‘I’m liking this too much. I’ve got to stop.’”

Welsh is practised at monitoring his proclivities, drawing the line and sticking to it. His addiction to heroin in his early 20s, “living in a Velvet Underground album, basically”, is well documented (he used notes and diaries from this time to draft Trainspotting). He tried rehab, but it was just a chance “to detox [to] start again with a clean slate, get some pills in”, so he went cold turkey.

Was it hard? “Not once I decided I really wanted to,” he says. “The worst part is the psychological thing. Once [drug use] is in your emotional vocabulary as your get-out – ‘I can stop feeling crap by doing this’ – you have to reorder your thinking.”

Reordering thoughts isn’t always easy, but, for Welsh, making the decision seems tantamount to its execution. He has a self-applied strictness, which implies he is his own master, but also gives the impression of having to countermand his compulsions.

It’s not just the gun he’s overruled, but also sitting down. “Sitting down is the new cigarettes,” he says. As far as demonised

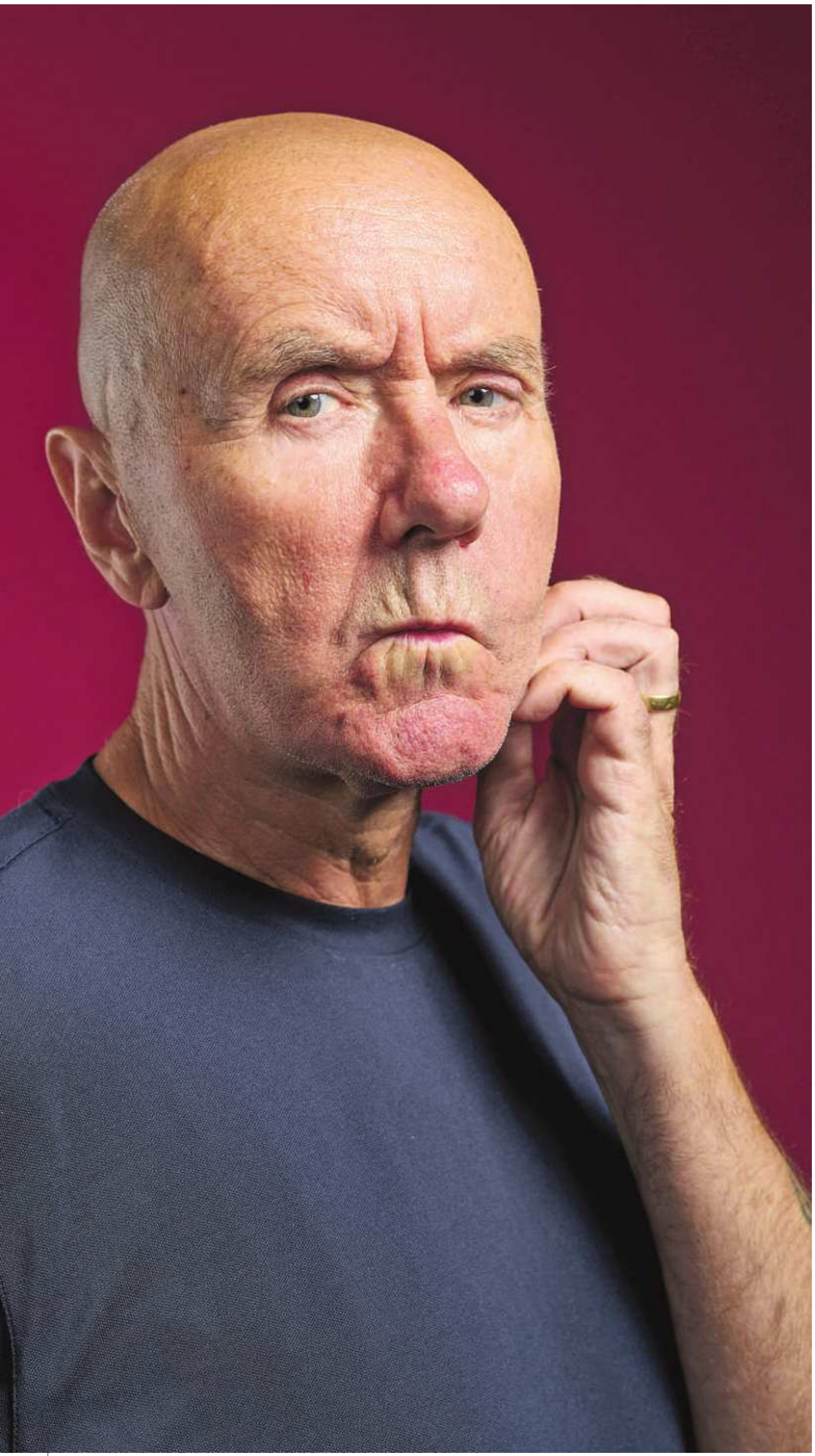
lifestyle choices go, being sedentary is not the one typically associated with Welsh, but these days he writes at a standing desk. The other week, he took the train from Edinburgh to Guildford in Surrey for a rehearsal of Trainspotting the Musical. The next day he was in agony.

“I was fucked from sitting all day,” he says. “I quite liked it.”

Liked the pain?

“The idea that it has become something that makes me feel bad, so I don’t do it any more.”

Not surprisingly, given the grim pleasure he took from how his body registered dissent, he is geekily disciplined about wellbeing.



▲ *'You go to bed happy and clean and everybody else is wrecked' … Irvine Welsh*

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID LEVENE, MURDO MACLEOD/ THE GUARDIAN, TCD/PROD.DB/ALAMY

> *'I stopped celebrating birthdays when I got to 30. I was really depressed'*

He takes the Zapply nutritional supplement favoured by boxers - he has boxed since childhood, when his parents sent him to toughen him up. He also attends breathing workshops - "Everything is better afterwards: your digestion, your sleeping" - and practises pilates and yoga.

Especially yin yoga - or "lazy bastards' yoga", as he calls it, because poses are held for several minutes. "You feel yourself opening up … Your shoulders, back, hips … It makes you calmer."

With his shiny head and straight mouth, I can't help picturing Welsh briefly in an alternative career as a wellbeing guru or monk. Especially when he says: "I'm more Zen now than I used to be."

Just before Christmas, he was at the funeral of Mani, the bass player for Primal Scream and the Stone Roses. Once upon a time, Welsh would have been drinking with the best of them. Instead he microdosed and was "off my tits" on Guinness 0.0 and a cup of mushroom chocolate. "Then bang! You're sober … You go to bed feeling happy and clean … Everybody else is wrecked."

Maybe the decisively slow yoga practice, the strict drawing of lines, is a way to counteract his own frenzy. For someone so relentlessly productive, it's notable that his favourite bit of writing is to write "*The End*". He always types the words.

It's possible Welsh is on his own accelerationist trajectory, because this is his third novel in three years. He's already written the next novel - a return to the Trainspotting cast - and started the one after that.

"Banging them out!" he says cheerfully, pretend-typing with hands bunched into fists, as if he's punching the keyboard. Maybe he does. He goes to Miami each January, stays for three months, and between the gym and yoga, "easily" amasses 90,000 words.

"I'm just playing, basically," he says. "You know when you're a kid and you line up your soldiers on the carpet? I'm doing the same thing." An only child, he always prized the "luxury" of his own room.

Sometimes, his wife - Emma Currie, an actor; they married four years ago - yells up. "'You've got real friends down here that have come for dinner! Come and talk to them instead of your imaginary friends!'" he says. "'You're talking to people that don't exist! You're a nutter!'"

I wonder how it felt to write a multigenerational novel of complex family dynamics as an only child with no children of his own (though he is stepfather to three). Welsh was close to both parents, but his dad, a former dockworker and carpet salesman who died when Welsh was in his 20s, "was my best mate", and the relationship with his mother, a waitress, "more fractious".

She was "very loving, but never into having kids". She often told him: "You were an accident, son. A lovely accident, but an accident." "She was quite tough," he says. "She could be very critical of the books.

"She hated Trainspotting at first. 'You're hanging your dirty washing in public! Bringing shame on me again! I'm embarrassed!'" His parents "weren't massively drug-literate" and didn't know when Welsh was using heroin.

◀ *Revisiting Edinburgh's port area, Leith, where he was born*

But Trainspotting grew on Welsh's mother. "When it started to make money, she was like: 'I want new windows, son.' I bought her council house and got the windows double-glazed and a new door. She was all right with it after that. 'My laddie's written a book and it's a bestseller!'" he says in a Scottish accent stronger than his own. "I do miss her." She died in 2023.

"She got a bit frail in her last couple of years. It put me in a strange position because she could be *so* cutting. We had these brilliant jousts. Then she got a bit slower and frail, and I felt I was bullying her if I tried to get involved in the cut and thrust of our jousts … But I felt I was patronising her if I didn't."

They did find peace. "Me and my mum, we said everything to each other. We put it all out on the table emotionally and talked about how we loved each other, how we were friends, how we've been through this and that together." In a funny way, he says: "We did that too early. We were twiddling our thumbs for the last five years."

Family love comes through in the novel as an important remedy. As to political answers, Welsh has previously said he'd like to dissolve the monarchy and the House of Lords, institutions that are "not really serving any function in the lives of most citizens". He'd have "as much devolution as Britain and England wanted or needed".

More personally, he believes that as people "become fed up with the system", they will switch off. He's noticed this switching off in himself.

"The office now posts all my stuff on X. This thing here," he says, tapping his phone. "I've started going out without it. After about an hour, you're anxious. Then you feel so liberated.'" He won't touch AI, even for research.

One of the problems of the internet, he says, is it strips the context from everything - including Welsh himself. At events in college towns, "there'll all be young people in the audience and they expect me to be young. 'Who is this old fucker? That can't be Irvine Welsh!'"

Yet there's something ageless about him, even if now he gets "the young team" - friends' and cousins' children - to check his younger characters' dialogue for him.

"Tell that to the mirror!" he says.

He hasn't counted his age in years. Does he even know it?

"Sixty … eight? Sixty-nine?" he asks. (The internet says 67.) "I stopped celebrating birthdays when I got to 30. I was really depressed. I thought: 'I'm not doing this again.'"

It sounds like ageing, measuring age - or maybe growing up - is another practice he's drawn a line under. But he doesn't fear what follows. He recently abandoned lifelong atheism, after a trip on the psychedelic drug DMT. "Now I just don't know," he says. "I'm quite excited … You do look at life in a more positive way."

Can Nothing Save Us? (Jonathan Cape, £20) is published on 13 August. To support the Guardian, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com

‘Trumpeters? We think we’re the kings of the orchestra’

It has 12 movements, 200 musicians and aims to unite America. Wynton Marsalis talks about his All Rise symphony, which is about to kick off the Edinburgh international festival

John Lewis

▲ *‘I was one of the youngest in the orchestra. Now I’m probably the oldest’ … Marsalis*

At Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh, Wynton Marsalis is hard to spot. When he first played this venue, in 1984, he was the prodigious 22-year-old soloist out front, blowing Haydn’s trumpet concerto under the baton of Lorin Maazel. Tonight he is embedded in the machinery: half-hidden behind ranks of strings and woodwind, a black-suited figure in the heart of his own symphony.

It’s a strange way for a composer to behave – especially one whose public persona has long been associated with certainty, polemic and the upright authority of a man who can make any argument sound like a moral law. Yet Marsalis seems almost pleased by his disappearance. “It’s my piece,” he says, as we talk in his hotel room the next morning, “but it’s not my show.”

The piece is All Rise, Marsalis’s first symphony, written in 1999 – a mammoth hybrid for a 15-piece jazz band, a 50-piece orchestra and a 100-piece choir, premiered at the turn of the millennium by the New York Philharmonic with Kurt Masur. Across 12 movements, Marsalis paints a sprawling civic canvas whose building blocks are American – marches, blues, dance rhythms – and whose aspiration is almost embarrassingly large: to sound like pluralism.

This year’s Edinburgh international festival has built its artistic theme around the piece: on the opening night at Usher Hall, Marsalis and his Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra will join the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and massed choirs. That’s more than 200 performers. Edinburgh has had no shortage of big opening statements, but this is a pointed choice: a work first conceived as a celebration of integration, now revived when the very idea of common culture has begun to look quaint.

In the past, Marsalis could be confrontational: a man with a rulebook and a relish for battle. Today he’s mellower: quick to credit others, reject ego and talk more about collaboration than correction. He’s keen to puncture the myth that a symphonic work is the solitary utterance of genius. “All Rise was a collaborative exercise. James Oliverio, a soundtrack writer, was teaching me how to orchestrate while I was doing it. I had Milan Turković, the great Austrian bassoonist, helping me with the woodwind. But the main man was the late conductor Kurt Masur. He was always goading me to write something for him. ‘Are you afraid to write for the New York Philharmonic?’ he’d say. Kurt saw a segregated New York, and wanted a piece that brought people together.”

Masur – East German, Beethovenian, exacting – was conscripted into the German army as a teen in the final months of the second world war. “I remember he told me then, ‘You think that nazism is unique to Germany? It can happen here.’ Kurt said nazism didn’t happen because people were poor: it happened because lots of Germans wanted to behave like that. And, coming from the south, I could relate to that.”

For some, All Rise is exhilarating: a large-scale attempt to make American music sound like an argument worth having. For others, it feels like an impossible negotiation: two institutions – orchestra and big band – asked to behave like one. Marsalis has always been furiously outspoken about what he sees as the malign role of “fusion” in jazz, and is equally wary of the limits of fusing jazz and symphonic music. “I wanted to draw from American mythology and find intersections. Because with some music, there is no common ground.”

For instance? “You’re not going to hear a jazz version of a Beethoven symphony. It’s too many chord changes.” Marsalis’s first symphony is instead built on the dance music shared by Americans. “It’s about the relationship between tango and choro; between ragtime and Anglo-Celtic fiddle music; between New Orleans marches and European band counterpoint. But you have to be aware of certain things. In classical music, the basses don’t play all the time. In our music, it plays all the time. And in classical music, the percussion is accent, but in jazz and Latin music, it’s everything.

“So you have to find the common ground that you intersect with. Because if you’re not on that ground, there’s no intersection. John Coltrane said he was looking for a universal coefficient. It’s like the word mama. You say mama, it has a universal sound and feeling to it.”

Unlike some of Marsalis’s other large-scale pieces, All Rise is not a polemic. “If you want to know how I think jazz can help democracy, listen to [2020 album] The Ever Fonky Lowdown. If you want to hear what I say about government corruption listen to my song Super

▶ *Massed ranks … jazz band, orchestra and choirs on stage in Pittsburgh*

‘When you hang out with old people, you stay 19 for ever’

Capitalism. But All Rise is different, it’s about bringing people together.”

Drawing from spirituals, gospel music and European devotional sources, All Rise is also full of God. Has his faith changed since writing it? “No. I always had a very strong spiritual faith that was not denominational, even as a kid. I came from very spiritual people. I spent a lot of time with my great uncle, who was born in 1883. He was a stonecutter for the cemetery. If you are around death that much, you become religious.

“But I never believed in the dogma. I always noticed the contradictions in Christianity: the saviour was poor, the church is rich. The saviour took a vow of poverty and said, ‘Love people.’ But a lot of religious people don’t love people who aren’t into their religion. So my libretto constantly counterstates that. I draw from the Muslim call to prayer as much as the Bible.”

Marsalis, now 64, is fascinated by such ecumenical statements: he remembers his father telling him to read Autobiography of a Yogi when he left high school. “That book was hard work. My dad told me to carry a notebook and write down the name of each swami. When you want to make connections, you have to really work at it.”

One connection he’s worked at is his marriage. Marsalis recently married Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti, who also happens to be director of the Edinburgh international festival. They have a daughter, Elise, born in 2024. Their relationship is largely long-distance – lengthy FaceTime chats and phone conversations. Would he ever move to the UK? “I’m going to have to plead the fifth,” he says with a chuckle, but also dismisses the prospect of Benedetti joining him in New York. “She’s not going to do that,” he says with a resigned smile.

Benedetti, 26 years Marsalis’s junior, has been a frequent collaborator. “What really made me fall in love with Nicola was when I wrote a violin concerto for her,” says Marsalis. “After the first run-through, she sent me a list of about 40 notes. First I laughed. Then I read them. Her detail was incredible. ‘If you put the violas on beat one of the 58th bar, that will save us 20 minutes of rehearsal time.’ And so on.

“I was amazed that she was able to notice all of this while playing the piece. I have so much respect for her, the time she spends practising, her dedication to the humility of study.” Has he learned humility from her? “Maybe. Trumpeters, we think we’re the kings of the orchestra, there to blow down the walls of Jericho. We think the piece only starts when we start playing. We know the strings are doing something but we can’t figure out what the hell they’re up to. Maybe I’m less like that now …”

I suggest that people will already expect young Elise to grow up as a virtuoso musician. “She’s a hell of a singer,” he says. “But you can’t determine what your children do. I’ve got three sons – only one is a musician. He’s mainly a visual artist, but he makes music. One teaches track and soccer. Another teaches literature. I never put them in any direction – I just wanted to make sure they have integrity.”

How is he coping with late fatherhood? “I always used to hang out with older people. All my mentors were older men – not just my father, but Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie, Sweets Edison, Elvin Jones, August Wilson. And, when you’re hanging out with old people, you stay 19 for ever. But I’ve always enjoyed hanging with young people too. It’s a privilege when people come up after gigs, teenage kids with their parents, asking for advice. It takes a village to raise a child. We’re all raising the same kid.”

When Marsalis began running the jazz orchestra and jazz programme at Lincoln Center – New York’s pre-eminent arts complex – he was just 26. “I was one of the youngest in the orchestra. Now I’m probably the oldest.” He recently announced that he will be stepping back from his executive leadership role after nearly four decades, while remaining involved artistically for a transition period.

Maybe stepping away has altered his vision. For decades it was his pulpit for declarations; now he sounds more interested in how musicians learn one another’s language – happy to defer, amused by his own ego. “I think about Copernicus and Galileo, about how they both observed that the Earth was not the centre of the solar system. They realised that, every time you discovered a new body, the equation became more complicated, until you stopped clinging to the old ways of looking at the universe. Maybe we all need to do that.”

All Rise opens the Edinburgh international festival on 8 August. The UK premiere of Marsalis’s Concerto for Orchestra is at the BBC Proms on 13 August

◀ *‘I fell in love with Nicola when I wrote her a violin concerto’ … Marsalis’s wife Nicola Benedetti*

PHOTOGRAPHS: GILBERTO TADDAY/JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER; ANDY PARADISE

▶ *Feline feral … the cast rehearse; below, Cats obsessive McOnie*
PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK SENIOR

No pussyfooting around

Drew McOnie skipped school to audition for the original Cats. Now he’s created his own dance version that’s anything but cute

Lyndsey Winship

At the age of 17, Drew McOnie was so determined to be in the musical Cats that he snuck out of school to audition. Four days later, he was on a flight to Germany to join the international production. (Luckily, he was at a performing arts school and they forgave him.) It was a life-changing moment: at that point, McOnie’s stellar career as a dancer, Olivier award-winning choreographer and director began – and, 23 years later, it’s all about to come full circle. McOnie has created his own version of the musical he’s been obsessed with since childhood.

For any dancer growing up in the 1980s and 90s, Cats was *the* musical: dance wasn’t an accompaniment, but instrumental to the show. Gillian Lynne’s original choreography is iconic – much copied by local dance schools of the era. Lynne was a force of nature, still doing the splits at 88, four years before she died in 2018. For McOnie, artistic director at Regent’s Park Open Air theatre and famed for his blazing choreography in Jesus Christ Superstar, it takes nerve to remake it.

“I don’t think I’ve ever felt so scared,” he says. Not because he doesn’t think he can do it, but “because I was in the original and I adore Gillian Lynne. The challenge is to honour her with the amount of rigour she put in – to match that ferocity of spirit, that ambition.”

We might now think of Cats as a “glorious celebration of the 80s”, says McOnie, but we shouldn’t forget how original and contemporary it was when it first came out. He wants his version to feel the same to audiences today. That means movement that brings in current influences from street and commercial dance, as well as jazz and classical, “while also staying within that world of being a cat”.

As I enter Studio 1 at Regent’s Park, the energy’s buzzing, the moves are sensual, low slung and slinky, earthier than the original, but with bursts of wild, joyful energy. Then the dancers suddenly go full pelt. It’s more feral than you might expect. “I don’t think many of our cats are house cats,” says McOnie.

Because his youthful experience on Cats was so formative, McOnie deliberately went in search of standout student dancers to add to the mix. “There are a lot of kittens in the cast,” he says. The young dancers are so effortlessly cool, he tells me, not like Tiggerish McOnie was at their age, bouncing off the walls. But in rehearsals, he started digging beneath their inscrutable exteriors, letting them loose in solos. “One lad just completely lit up and I was like, ‘OK, there’s the teenager.’ I said, ‘I like the version of you bounding about with your eyes on fire.’ My task is to make each one of them light up.”

Cats isn’t known as a “cool” show, but McOnie thinks we forget how impressively out-there Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musicals can be. “They’re extraordinarily off the wall, completely form-busting and brave,” he says. He has nothing but praise for Lloyd Webber. “Honestly, my time with Andrew over the last year, with the combination of Jesus Christ Superstar and Cats, has been utterly thrilling. He’s very witty, he’s very sharp, and he’s really, really rigorous.” McOnie is awed by Lloyd Webber’s ability to see the big picture. “He’s like a musical architect,” says McOnie, able to glean how every detail fits into the larger show. “There’s definitely a magic about what he can hear.”

McOnie does admit Cats is a bit weird. Based on the TS Eliot poems in Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats, with portraits of Mungojerrie and Rumpleteazer, Macavity and Skimbleshanks, it doesn’t have a strong narrative. “It levitates somewhere between choreo-poem, ballet, song cycle, vaudeville and pagan ritual,” he says.

What it isn’t is a bunch of cute talking animals. In this production, the costumes won’t be fully formed cats, and they’re not masked. McOnie sees it as “a ritual that endows the performer with an animal form through which they can express deep human emotion”. There’ll still be some “great glittery numbers” though, don’t worry. “Its core themes are wonder and joy.”

I have to ask McOnie briefly about the much-maligned Cats film. It turns out he loved a lot of things about it but thinks it was doomed from the start. “It just isn’t a filmic idea,” he says. “Cats is one of the most extraordinary expressions of theatricality of all time,” he says. “Capital-T theatre – because so much of it hangs in the imagination. You have this mass of bodies giving all of their soul to that music – live in the room.”

It comes back to Lynne’s legacy. She trusted dancers and the power of what they could do. McOnie has the same animal instinct.

Cats is at Regents Park Open Air theatre, London, until 19 September

REVIEW BY SARAH DEMPSTER

Richard E Grant's Very Modern Odyssey

◀ *'I'm utterly bewitched' … Grant in Malta*

Our noble hero's enthusiasm for all things Homer is irresistible

★★★★☆

Channel 4

Here comes Richard E Grant, pounding towards us in a tiny leather jacket as he gesticulates wildly at his cobbled surrounds. "Wow," he gasps. "Look at that." We look at that. It's Malta. Specifically, Malta's Grand Harbour: a sobbingly beautiful gateway to the Mediterranean and the sun-blessed starting line for Richard E Grant's Very Modern Odyssey, a four-part travelogue "inspired by Homer's hero" in which the veteran actor traces Odysseus's "incredible journey" while wearing a succession of increasingly voluminous linen trousers.

Said tracing is not, however, an exact science. This is not one of those awful celebrity things in which our noble hero arms himself with set squares and a scholastic scowl before setting sail on a "voyage" to uncover "the truth". Nor is it an attempt to contribute to the seemingly interminable Odyssey discourse – the ongoing hoo-ha over the historical accuracy of the Christopher Nolan blockbuster that already feels as if it's lasted longer than the Trojan war.

Instead, it's a loose-limbed, easygoing thing that attempts to separate Homeric myth from reality, but appears equally "chill" with the fact that much of it remains fundamentally unknowable. "Essentially," says Grant, grinning hugely, "we're dealing with an act of the imagination."

So here we are in the Maltese capital of Valletta, which doesn't appear to have featured on Odysseus's itinerary, but does have a Michelin-starred restaurant that serves butter-basted pigeon with sage and rosemary. Naturally, Grant is cock-a-hoop. "Mmm," he shouts while frantically licking his plate, much as the Greeks "licked" the Trojans after the siege of Troy.

This is followed by a brief stop at the luxurious Phoenecia hotel for a lime mocktail and some wistful reminiscing about Malta's colonial past ("This was Queen Elizabeth's favourite hangout!"), before it's off for a gander at Valletta's perfectly extraordinary St John's Co-Cathedral.

"I've never seen anything like this in my life," splutters our host, drifting through the nave open-mouthed as he takes in its baroque tumult of golden whorls and thunderstruck cherubim. "Honestly, it out-Sistines the Sistine Chapel." And it does. Built by the Order of St John in the 16th century, it's a frantic masterpiece of death and glory, its ornate marble floor housing the tombs of 400 "warrior knights".

"In Homer's world," says Grant, "heroes make a sacrifice to the gods every time they sail into danger. Here, the ritual was different, but the idea was the same: ask for help before you do something terrifying." The actor is moved. "I'm not a religious man," he tells us later, chin smushed into his enormous brown neckerchief. "But going inside that jewel of a church was one of the most beautiful experiences I've ever had."

Here, there are epiphanies around every corner. Valletta's Lurpak-coloured stonework is "a revelation". The cave on the Maltese island of Gozo that may or may not have been the inspiration for the home of the saucy nymph Calypso leaves him "nearly in tears".

"I'm utterly bewitched by every detail," he roars at one point. He is a one-man brass section of patrician glee.

These days, we note, there is a slight fuzziness to Grant's barrel-aged boom, as if his vowels had rolled under a chaise longue and been left to gather a fine layer of fluff. When he reads extracts from Homer's poem in the ruins of an amphitheatre, he sounds both wearily thrilled and knackered, like a kindly oak tree completing a particularly taxing parkrun.

The opening episode concludes with a visit to the bronze age ruins of Troy. This was "almost certainly" the site of "a real, bloody war". More vagueness. But it's all to the good. Homer's gargantuan tale of Mediterranean aggro remains powerfully relevant, says a local historian. "Refugees, climate change, political crisis – all of these things you find in The Odyssey."

Another huge grin from Grant. "It seems Homer blurred fact and fiction into a story that has lasted over two and a half thousand years," he trumpets. "A success by any measure." As, indeed, is Grant's own Very Modern Odyssey. Lime mocktails all round.

What's On
Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews and news direct to your inbox every Monday

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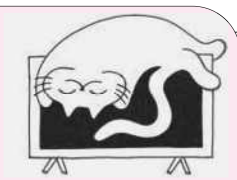
WHAT TO WATCH



Celebrity Hunted

9pm, Channel 4

They've gathered a likable bunch for the seventh series of this survival show. Strictly's Amy Dowden and Carlos Gu *(above)* bring the glam, while the comedian Brian Conley and his daughter, Lucy, have an advantage: "Only old people know who I am," he says. The other runaways are Love Island's Chris Taylor and Toby Aromolaran, the TV presenters JJ Chalmers and Sophie Morgan, the property experts Scarlette and Stuart Douglas, and the comics Jen Brister and Laura Smyth. **Hollie Richardson**

Britain's Strictest Schools – Panorama

8pm, BBC One

Detention for looking out of a window? Last month, Devon and Cornwall's Athena Learning Trust announced it will dissolve and transfer its schools to other organisations after parents complained about strict disciplinary measures. Richard Bilton investigates the multi-academy trust and speaks to former teachers and students. **HR**

Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace

9pm, ITV1

The family reunion show's spin-off series, focused on foundlings, returns. Nicky Campbell and Davina McCall help David, who was abandoned in a London block of flats in 1960, trace his origins to France and the Netherlands. For the week's other participant, Sarah, the story starts in a Leicester telephone box in 1983. **Jack Seale**

Sally Magnusson Remembers … Mastermind

9pm, BBC Four

For many, Mastermind will always be synonymous with the urbane quiz master Magnus Magnusson. This enjoyable documentary takes a trip down memory lane with his daughter Sally, who recalls the show's origins, her youthful excitement at its success and how it felt to have strangers yell "I've started, so I'll finish!" at her in the street. **Phil Harrison**

Evolution

9pm, BBC Two

How did we become intelligent? Which was the first animal to "think"? Chris Packham finds out in another mind-blowing evolution lesson by focusing on the super-smart dolphin. He rewinds billions of years to light-sensitive cells that developed into the first eyes, which would lead to the first brains. Surprisingly, moths get a mention in this quest of cleverness. **HR**

Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives

10pm, Channel 4

In the latest instalment of this documentary reality show, we learn a bit more about the marginalisation Trewley faced at school. As she heads to Liverpool to see about potentially launching a lipliner range, will her impostor syndrome get the better of her? **Priya Elan**

BBC One

6.0 Breakfast (T) **9.30** Animal Park (T) (R) **10.15** Trace, Track, Get My Car Back (T) (R) **10.45** Expert Witness (T) (R) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Money for Nothing (T) **2.45** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** The Bidding Room (T) **4.30** The Answer Run (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Panorama: Britain's Strictest Schools** (T) The policies of the Athena Learning Trust in Devon and Cornwall.

8.30 **Scam Interceptors** (T) (R) A man believes he will be arrested if he doesn't pay up.

9.0 **The Rapture** (T) Gabs finally meets Anika Drake, while new nurse Siobhan raises suspicions at Oxsmith.

10.0 News (T)

10.30 Regional News (T) Weather

10.45 FILM **The Mist** (Frank Darabont, 2007) (T) A strange fog concealing ravenous monsters envelops a town. Sci-fi horror, starring Thomas Jane and Andre Braugher.

12.40 Weather for the Week Ahead (T) **12.45** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **7.15** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: The Repair Shop (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **1.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **1.30** The Finish Line (T) (R) **2.15** Do You Know Your Place? (T) (R) **2.45** The Hairy Bikers' Bakeation (T) (R) **3.45** The Farmers' Country Showdown (T) (R) **4.30** Vintage Antiques Roadshow (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **7.0** Global Eye (T) **7.30** Mastermind (T)

8.0 **Only Connect** (T) Hosted by Victoria Coren Mitchell.

8.30 **University Challenge** (T) Guildhall School of Music and Drama takes on Darwin College, Cambridge.

9.0 **Evolution** (T) Chris Packham studies dolphins to find answers to how intelligence evolved, from light-sensing cells to conscious thought.

10.0 **Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing** (T) (R) The pair visit the Norfolk Broads.

10.30 Newsnight (T) Weather

11.05 FILM **Sing Sing** (Greg Kwedar, 2023) (T) Prison drama, starring Colman Domingo and Sean San José.

12.45 Sign Zone: Countryfile (T) (R) **1.40** Bergerac (T) (R) **2.25** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 Good Morning Britain (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Deal Or No Deal (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Fletchers' Family Farm (T) (R)

8.0 **Emmerdale** (T) Cain has an important conversation, and Nicola's excitement fades.

8.30 **Coronation Street** (T) Cassie bids an emotional farewell to her family.

9.0 **Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace** (T) New series. Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell investigate cases from 1983 and 1960.

10.0 News (T) Weather

10.30 Local News (T) Weather

10.45 **Cold Case Forensics: The Death of God's Banker** (T) (R) A look at the death of Italian banker Roberto Calvi.

11.45 Love & Death (T) (R)

12.45 Shop on TV **3.0** The Staircase (T) (R) **4.05** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.30 The King of Queens (T) (R) **7.45** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) **11.10** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (T) (R) **1.10** The Great House Giveaway (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** Saving Country Houses With Penelope Keith (T) (R) **5.0** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **6.0** American Pickers (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **Dover 24/7: Britain's Busiest Port** (T) Border Force officers are on the hunt for illegal meat being smuggled into Britain, while police officers are on a stakeout.

9.0 **Celebrity Hunted** (T) New series. Competitors include Brian and Lucy Conley, Amy Dowden and Carlos Gu, and Scarlette and Stuart Douglas.

10.0 **Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives** (T) It's bonfire night.

11.05 Surgery Secrets of the Super Rich (T) (R)

12.05 Secrets of the Celebrity Sex Tapes (T) **12.55** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.45** Don't Date Brandon (T) (R) **4.30** Hollyoaks (T) (R) **5.40** Sunday Brunch (T) (R) **5.50** Countdown (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 Milkshake! **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.30** Storm & Alexis (T) **12.45** News (T) **12.50** Matt Allwright (T) **2.20** FILM A Reservation for Death (Jeff Beesley, 2021) (T) **4.0** Castle (T) (R) **4.55** Love Nature (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Majorca: A Year in the Sun (T) (R) **6.55** News (T) **7.0** Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders (T) (R) **7.55** News (T)

8.0 **Street Cops: Catching the Yobs** (T) Police pursue a suspected stolen SUV in Corby, and Northampton PCs are called to deal with a loud aggressive drunk.

9.0 **Fare Dodgers: At War With the Law** (T) New series. Transport for London investigator Lisa pursues a suspected fare evader.

10.0 Police Interceptors: Taking Down the Shoplifting Gangs (T) (R)

11.05 Traffic Cops (T) (R)

12.05 Car Pound Cops (T) (R) **1.0** Cruise TV (T) (R) **2.0** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (T) (R) **2.50** Castle (T) (R) **3.40** Friends (T) (R) **4.35** The Highland Vet (T) (R) **5.25** Entertainment News (T)

BBC Four

7.0 **Atlantic: The Wildest Ocean on Earth** (T) (R) Life in the warm waters of the tropical Atlantic.

8.0 **The Art of Spain** (T) (R) Series exploring the influences on Spanish art.

9.0 **Sally Magnusson Remembers: Mastermind** (T) The presenter's memories of her father, Magnus.

9.20 **Mastermind 1972 Final** (T) (R) With Magnus Magnusson.

9.50 **Call My Bluff** (T) (R) Hosted by Robert Robinson.

10.20 **Becoming Frida Kahlo** (T) (R) Last in the series.

11.20 **Turner: The Man Who Painted Britain** (T) (R) Chronicling the artist JMW Turner's life, including his tragic childhood.

12.20 Atlantic: The Wildest Ocean on Earth (T) (R) **1.20** Becoming Frida Kahlo (T) (R) **2.20** The Art of Spain (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm The Catch Up **7.05** Deadly 60 **7.30** Deadly 60 **8.0** The Great British Sewing Bee **9.0** Top Gear Patagonia Special **10.05** Top Gear Patagonia Special **11.10** Icons of Football **12.10** Tommy: The Good. The Bad. The Fury **2.40** A Better Place **2.55** BBC New Comedy Awards 2024 **3.25** BBC New Comedy Awards 2024

U&Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.25** Top Gear **8.20** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **10.20** Rick Stein's Spain **11.20** Yukon Gold **12.20** Top Gear **2.20** Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing **3.0** Martin Clunes: Islands of America **4.0** Rick Stein's Spain **6.0** The Hairy Bikers: Mums Know Best **7.0** Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing **7.40** Would I Lie to You? **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **10.0** QI XL **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** Would I Lie to You? **2.0** QI XL **3.05** Richard Osman's House of Games **3.35** Parks and Recreation **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **6.55** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **7.0** Couples Come Dine With Me **8.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **10.0** America's Funniest Home Videos **11.0** Below Deck: Mediterranean **12.0** The Simpsons **2.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Modern Family **4.30** Modern Family **5.0** The Simpsons **5.30** The Simpsons **6.0** The Simpsons **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** The Simpsons **8.0** Vanderpump Rules **9.0** Below Deck Down Under **10.0** Gogglebox **11.0** Naked Attraction **12.05** First Dates **1.10** Vanderpump Rules **2.10** Below Deck Down Under **3.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **3.55** The Simpsons **4.20** The Simpsons **4.45** The Goldbergs **5.10** The Goldbergs **5.35** Brooklyn Nine-Nine

Film4

11.0am FILM Paw Patrol: The Movie (2021) **12.40** FILM Prince Valiant (1954) **2.45** FILM Mr Hobbs Takes a Vacation (1962) **5.0** FILM 10 Things I Hate About You (1999) **6.50** FILM The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (2003) **9.0** FILM Twister (1996) **11.15** FILM Beast (2022) **1.05** FILM Monster Hunter (2020)

PBS America

6.0am Teleshopping **8.0** America the Bountiful **8.50** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **9.50** Pirates: Behind the Legends **10.50** The Anti-Soviet Fighters **12.0** Hitler's Gold **1.0** America the Bountiful **1.35** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **2.35** Hitler's Gold **3.40** Pirates: Behind the Legends **4.40** The Anti-Soviet Fighters **5.50** Hitler's Gold **6.55** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **7.55** Pirates: Behind the Legends **8.55** The Anti-Soviet Fighters **10.0** Hitler's Gold **11.0** Pirates: Behind the Legends **12.0** The Anti-Soviet Fighters **1.10** America the Bountiful **2.0** Teleshopping

Sky One

6.0am Mornings **6.30** Mornings **7.0** Mornings With Ridge and Frost **7.30** Mornings With Ridge and Frost **8.0** Stargate SG-1 **9.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **10.0** Will & Grace **10.30** Will & Grace **11.0** The Simpsons **11.30** The Simpsons **12.0** Big Cat Country **1.0** Hawaii Five-0 **2.0** Hawaii Five-0 **3.0** S.W.A.T **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** The Simpsons **5.30** The Simpsons **6.0** Animal Control **6.30** Animal Control **7.0** The Simpsons **7.30** The Simpsons **8.0** Agatha Raisin **9.0** Agatha Raisin **10.0** Last Week Tonight With John Oliver **10.45** Animal Control **11.15** Animal Control **11.45** Grimm **12.40** The Force: Manchester **1.35** Road Wars **2.0** Best Medicine **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** S.W.A.T

Sky Arts

6.0am LSO: Rattle Conducts Brahms and Shostakovich **8.0** The Joy of Painting **8.30** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Peter O'Toole **12.0** The Movies **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour **3.0** The Seventies **4.0** Discovering: Joan Fontaine **5.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2021 **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** André Rieu: Happy Days Are Here Again **11.0** Brian and Roger Eno Live at the Acropolis **12.40** Up Late With Nicola Benedetti **2.15** Peter and the Wolf **3.45** Opera North's Resonance **4.0** The Sky Arts Book Club Summer Reads Special **5.0** The Movies

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Fish Town **8.0** Billions **9.05** Billions **10.15** Task **11.25** Task **12.30** Homicide: Life on the Street **2.30** Billions **4.40** Task **5.45** Task **6.50** True Detective: Night Country **7.55** True Detective: Night Country **9.0** House of the Dragon **10.15** The Last of Us **11.20** Dune: Prophecy **12.30** Task **1.40** Task **2.50** Billions **5.05** The Guest Wing

▲ *10 Things I Hate About You, Film4*

Radio

Radio 3

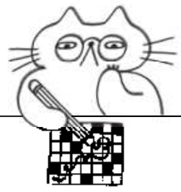
6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. From the Proms, Sakari Oramo conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Sibelius's Symphony No 2. Plus, at the Ryedale festival, Dvořák's Piano Quintet No 2 in A major, Op 81, from the Aris Quartet and pianist Lukas Sternath. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Mozart (1/5) **5.0** In Tune. With live music by pianist Alexandra Dariescu. **7.0** BBC Proms 2026. Live from the Royal Albert Hall, Thomas Søndergård conducts the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and pianist Kirill Gerstein in Knussen's Flourish With Fireworks, Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini and Shostakovich's Symphony No 11 in G minor, "The Year 1905". **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** Across the Red Line. Anne McElvoy chairs a discussion on falling birth rates. (2/3) **9.30** How Did We Get Here?: No World Order. Tristan Redman examines the decade in which China reshaped its relationship with the international system. (2/6) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Behind the Crime. Forensic psychologists Sally Tilt and Kerensa Hocken interview a man who spent years in a violent, lawless Ecuadorian prison for drug trafficking.(1/3) **11.45** Tony Hawks Is Giving Nothing Away (R) **12.0** News **12.04** You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** The Bare Necessities. Dan Richards meets people gathering life skills to survive in troubled times. (1/5) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Alone (R) **2.45** Naturebang. Becky Ripley and Emily Knight discuss giving rights to rivers and forests. (2/5) **3.0** A Good Read. With education activist Dr Vee Kativhu and actor Susie Riddell. (9/9) **3.30** You're Dead to Me (R) **4.0** Britain's Robot Army (R) **4.30** The Kitchen Cabinet (R) **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Just a Minute. With Paul Merton, Zoe Lyons, Catherine Bohart and Paterson Joseph. (3/6) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Briefing Room (R) **8.30** Inside Science (R) **9.0** Across the Red Line (R) **9.30** How Did We Get Here? (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield. By Oliver Goldsmith. (1/10) **11.0** Intimacy. Liza builds trust with the cast, but tensions with Gary deepen. (2/4) **11.30** Hollywood and the Adland Five (R) **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Tony Hawks Is Giving Nothing Away (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.0** News Summary **5.04** Britain's Robot Army (R) **5.32** Weather **5.34** Shipping Forecast **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

Radio 4 Extra

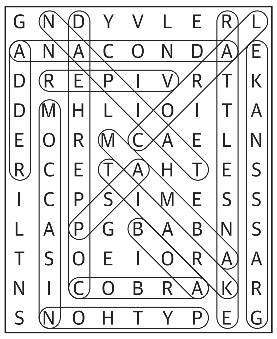
6.0am Raffles (6/6) **6.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? (1/5) **7.0** Control Group Six (3/4) **7.30** Dad's Army (12/20) **8.0** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner (2/4) **8.30** Following Pappano (1/5) **8.45** Small Island (6/15) **9.0** Just a Minute (2/6) **9.30** Behind the Taverna (1/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Screenshot (3/6) **10.45** Witness History **11.0** Raffles (6/6) **11.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? (1/5) **12.0** Control Group Six (3/4) **12.30** Dad's Army (12/20) **1.0** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner (2/4) **1.30** Following Pappano (1/5) **1.45** Small Island (6/15) **2.0** Wordaholics (3/6) **2.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (3/6) **3.0** When Marnie Was There **4.0** Screenshot (3/6) **4.45** Witness History **5.0** Raffles (6/6) **5.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? (1/5) **6.0** Control Group Six (3/4) **6.30** Dad's Army (12/20) **7.0** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner (2/4) **7.30** Following Pappano (1/5) **7.45** Small Island (6/15) **8.0** Wordaholics (3/6) **8.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (3/6) **9.0** When Marnie Was There **10.0** Comedy Club: Just a Minute (2/6) **10.30** Listen Against (4/4) **10.55** The Comedy Club Interview **11.0** Current-ish (2/3) **11.30** The In Crowd (1/5) **12.0** Screenshot (3/6) **12.45** Witness History **1.0** Raffles (6/6) **1.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? (1/5) **2.0** Control Group Six (3/4) **2.30** Dad's Army (12/20) **3.0** Dr Phil's Bedside Manner (2/4) **3.30** Following Pappano (1/5) **3.45** Small Island (6/15) **4.0** Wordaholics (3/6) **4.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (3/6) **5.0** When Marnie Was There



TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **ITHACA**

Friday's solutions

Wordsearch



Sudoku no 7,400

6	4	2	8	5	1	3	9	7
9	7	1	6	2	3	8	4	5
8	5	3	4	9	7	6	2	1
7	3	8	2	1	4	9	5	6
2	9	4	3	6	5	7	1	8
1	6	5	7	8	9	2	3	4
5	8	7	9	4	2	1	6	3
4	2	6	1	3	8	5	7	9
3	1	9	5	7	6	4	8	2

Suguru

4	3	4	2	5	3
2	1	5	1	4	1
3	4	3	2	5	2
1	2	1	4	3	1
3	4	3	5	2	5
2	1	2	1	3	4

Word wheel
INDICATED

Saturday's Quick crossword

Solution no 17,547

■	N	I	G	H	T	V	I	S	I	O	N	■
A	■	A	■	E	■	A	■	C	■	N	■	M
C	O	N	T	A	I	N	E	R	■	S	P	A
Q	■	■	■	R	■	I	■	E	■	L	■	C
U	P	S	E	T	■	T	O	W	P	A	T	H
I	■	O	■	E	■	Y	■	■	■	U	■	I
S	P	R	I	N	G	■	D	R	A	G	O	N
I	■	C	■	■	■	B	■	E	■	H	■	A
T	R	E	S	T	L	E	■	C	U	T	I	T
I	■	R	■	U	■	R	■	E	■	■	■	I
O	N	E	■	T	A	L	K	I	N	G	T	O
N	■	S	■	T	■	I	■	P	■	O	■	N
■	A	S	S	I	G	N	A	T	I	O	N	■

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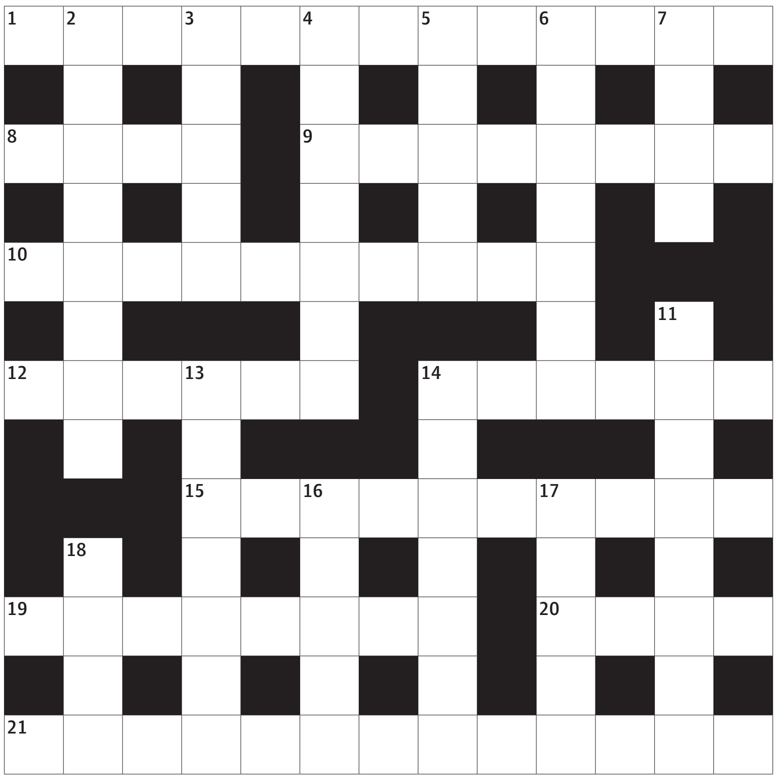
Quick crossword no 17,548

Across
- **1** Focus (13)
- **8** Brass, boy or big? (4)
- **9** Starving (8)
- **10** Raised deck at the front of a ship - clearest of (anag) (10)
- **12** Fumbled shot (6)
- **14** Trivial matter (6)
- **15** UK parliament's emblem (10)
- **19** Peak pudding? (8)
- **20** Gallagher or Coward? (4)
- **21** Futility (13)

Down
- **2** Haydn's The Creation, say (8)
- **3** Specialist team (5)
- **4** Tell a story (7)
- **5** Metal fastening (5)
- **6** Most nerve-racking (7)
- **7** Work of art (4)
- **11** Lacking compassion (8)
- **13** Cartoon punchline/label (7)
- **14** The ____ of Malfi, John Webster play (7)
- **16** Majestic (5)
- **17** Natural fabric prone to creasing (5)
- **18** Working-class, local or folk? (4)



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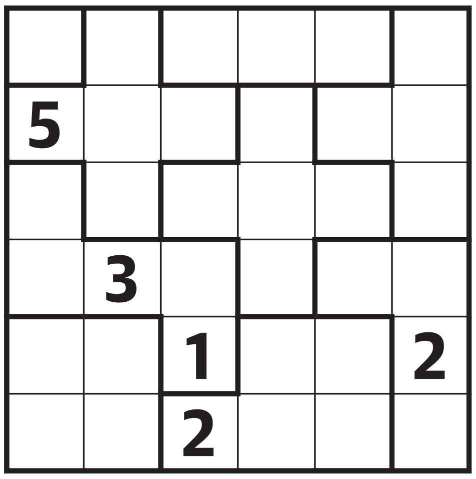
Sudoku no 7,404

Easy. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

1	7				5			
5			3	7		9		
			2	6				7
		1			6	5		2
2		7				8		9
3		8	5			4		
7				3	9			
		3		5	4			8
			6				1	4

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.



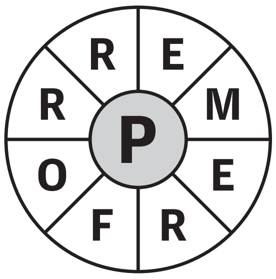
Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words associated with sherry in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

H	O	N	I	M	O	L	A	P
U	O	V	C	A	D	I	Z	E
F	L	Z	O	N	I	F	G	A
I	O	E	J	Z	C	A	P	E
T	R	R	T	A	T	E	A	R
S	O	E	T	N	R	R	F	U
E	S	J	I	I	E	H	L	S
G	O	V	T	L	F	U	O	A
I	G	I	O	L	N	I	R	E
D	F	S	P	A	I	N	E	M
S	C	H	O	O	N	E	R	D

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least three others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. Target: 9. Good: 11: Very good: 14. Excellent: 16.



Trivia corner

Which island does Odysseus rule in The Iliad and The Odyssey?
a. Ithaca
b. Santorini
c. Amorgos
d. Naxos
Answer top right